

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Permanent Change:

Rush, Musicians' Rock, and the Progressive Post-Counterculture

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Musicology

by

Durrell Scott Bowman

2003

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The dissertation of Durrell Scott Bowman is approved.

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With the exception of a brief example of music by Raymond Scott, all of the music discussed in this study was written by the members of Rush—Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, and/or Neil Peart—with occasional participation on lyrics by Peter Talbot or Pye Dubois. From the late 1970s through the early 2000s, Lee and Lifeson wrote the vast majority of the band’s music, and Neil Peart wrote the vast majority of its lyrics. Appendix K provides complete information concerning the band’s discography.

The author prepared all of the musical transcriptions.

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## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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- Bowman, D. "Art Rock," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, online and in the 2001-CD-ROM/DVD editions. See <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=117820>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Let Them All Make Their Own Music—Individualism, Rush, and the Progressive/Hard Rock Alloy, 1976-77," Chapter 9 in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), ed. Kevin Holm-Hudson
- \_\_\_\_\_. "To Rand or not to Rand: Neil Peart's Varied Influences," forthcoming in the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, 5.1 (Fall 2003). Reply to Chris Matthew Sciabarra's "Rand, Rush, and Rock" (which partly discusses *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*) in the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, 4.1 (Fall 2002).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Textu(r)al Undercoding and the Music of the Rock Band Rush: String Quartets, Death Metal, Trip-Hop and Other Tributes"
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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Permanent Change:

Rush, Musicians' Rock, and the Progressive Post-Counterculture

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology

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Professor Robert Walser, Chair

This dissertation investigates music by the Toronto-based rock band Rush. The band features Geddy Lee's virtuosic bass playing and countertenor singing, Alex Lifeson's precise-yet-tuneful guitar playing, and Neil Peart's elaborately constructed drumming and lyrics. Rush's music, from the 1970s through the early 2000s, mainly combined hard rock's emotive riffs and solos, heavy metal's power and intensity, and progressive rock's structural and metrical complexities. However, it often also employed stylistic fragments from a wide variety of additional types of music, including the blues, jazz-rock fusion, reggae, funk, classical, new wave, synth-pop, and alternative rock. I argue that the band's "musicianly" music appealed to an audience of several million people within a broader post-countercultural context involving technique, professionalism, technology, and entrepreneurialism. Although most rock critics preferred reactive/revolutionary music and consistent aesthetics, musician-fans and others from the post-industrial working and lower-middle classes often preferred adaptive/evolutionary music and unpredictable aesthetics.



Chapter 1 synthesizes the study's interpretive material, partly by summarizing various changes that took place in Rush's style over several decades. Chapter 2 establishes the context for Rush's music within an ideology and aesthetic that conflicted with other value systems. It also examines an early-1970s' Rush song in order to introduce the study's selective use of style discussions, musical notation, and/or lyrics within song interpretations also involving institutions, reception, genre, literature, and various additional issues. Chapter 3 considers mid- to late-1970s' Rush songs—including extended/individualist works—that laid the groundwork for the band's progressive/hard style. Chapter 4 explores Rush songs from much of the 1980s, the period when the band often incorporated music technology and/or secondary stylistic attributes within consistently concise songs. Chapter 5 studies Rush songs from 1989 to 2002, during which time the band tapered off its interest in music technology and increasingly engaged in updated variants of its earlier "power trio" style.

The dissertation contributes cultural musicology and song interpretations to a relatively new discourse involving a technique-oriented post-counterculture.

## Introduction

Before the show in a crowded arena, a man in his thirties spots an old friend and yells across to him: “Dude—I totally fucking knew you’d be here! It’s been a really long time.” They introduce their wives, exchange a few pleasantries, and return to their assigned seats. In their teens, these men bonded musically, but afterwards they moved on—into careers and long-term relationships and on to new friends. They live in the same city but have not kept in touch during the several thousand days since high school. Similar white males in their twenties, thirties, and forties comprise about two-thirds of the audience for the music about to be heard. However, the audience also includes blacks, Asians, Latinos, indigenous persons, women, teenagers, small groups, couples, and families. This diversity problematizes the commonly explored sociological factors of ethnicity, gender, and age, and this music only somewhat invokes such factors. The music of the band about to play functions most powerfully for that portion of tonight’s audience—several thousand of them, including hundreds of women and non-whites—who themselves participate in music-making. For the musician-fans in the audience, this event provides an opportunity for a considered experience of music.

Unexpectedly, the stage includes a row of several clothes dryers, into which a roadie feeds quarters over the next several hours and out of which the band eventually throws freshly laundered (i.e., *not* band-sweat-drenched) tee shirts into the audience. The dryers also participate in a humorous video component—referencing clothes dryers as black holes (presumably for socks)—that accompanies an otherwise deadly serious science-fiction song during the band’s encore. As the band prepares to take the stage, the visual effects crew dims the lights almost completely and a brief musical prelude features a recording of the Three Stooges’ jaunty theme song—itsself a variation on “Three Blind

Mice.” (The band about to play consists of three members.) The concert-event thus provides a sense of awe in tension with a subtle sense of humour, and the band’s music similarly inscribes various tensions.

The band’s songs derive from several decades, careening among hard rock’s emotive riffs and solos, heavy metal’s power and intensity, and progressive rock’s structural and metrical complexities. However, the band also sometimes employs stylistic fragments of the blues, rhythm-and-blues, jazz, jazz-rock fusion, reggae, funk, rap, classical, world, folk, post-punk, new wave, synth-pop, and alternative rock types of music. Jazz appears most overtly in the drum solo, which includes swing band video components, and the bassist-singer and guitarist follow this by performing an acoustic, folk-like, “unplugged” version of one of the band’s songs. The band uses the same set-list and song details tonight as it does for all of the performances in this five-month concert tour. Moreover, apart from a handful of pre-planned variants, it performs the songs in nearly the same form as when it originally composed and recorded them. Much of the audience sings along, but a large number of them also “play along” on air-guitar, air-bass, air-keyboards, and, especially, air-drums. For these fans, especially the many musician-fans, the prescribed form of the concert provides more than just something to enjoy. This evening’s music—by the progressive/hard rock band Rush—gives these fans something to believe in.

### **Why Rush?**

This study investigates aspects of society, culture, and music from the 1970s through the early 2000s. In those decades, “musicianly” music appealed to a large fan base within a post-countercultural ideology and aesthetic involving technique,

professionalism, technology, and entrepreneurialism. Whereas Marxian rock critics and others preferred reactive/revolutionary music and consistent aesthetics, musician-fans and others from the post-industrial working and lower-middle classes often preferred adaptive/evolutionary music and unpredictable aesthetics. The latter group welcomed rock music that explored unusually mathematical time signatures, complex song forms, and instrumental virtuosity within the rhetorical service of science-fiction, adventure, and a wide variety of comparably serious topics. This type of music included a successful series of albums and concert tours of “musicians’ music” by the Canadian rock band Rush (1968-). The band’s music features Geddy Lee’s virtuosic bass playing and countertenor singing, Alex Lifeson’s precise-yet-tuneful guitar playing, and Neil Peart’s elaborately constructed drumming and lyrics.<sup>1</sup> Peart (pronounced “Peert”), an agnostic and “left-wing libertarian,” joined the band in 1974 (i.e., after the band’s debut album) and proceeded to write the vast majority of its lyrics. His penchant for semi-literary lyrics, his copious reading (though rarely on music), and his rhetorically powerful drumming resulted in one of his nicknames—“The Professor.” The band’s “middle-brow” fans revered it for pursuing an eccentric and individual path over several decades, for subverting expectations about the music industry, and, as one musician-fan suggested, for “teach[ing] musicians to grow and improve themselves.”<sup>2</sup> By comparison, most rock critics considered Rush’s music “pretentious boredom.”<sup>3</sup> This study explores these and related issues, largely by musicologically interpreting representative pieces of music first

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<sup>1</sup> Rush consists of Gary Lee Weinrib (b. 29 July 1953 in Toronto, Ontario), Alexander Zivojinovich (b. 27 August 1953 in Fernie, British Columbia), and Neil Peart (b. 12 September 1952 in Hamilton, Ontario). Weinrib and Zivojinovich adopted their stage names in the late 1960s.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous respondent, D. Bowman, “Each Another’s Audience: A Rush Fan Survey,” 2000.

<sup>3</sup> J. Kordosh, “Rush: But Why Are They in Such a Hurry?” *Creem*, June 1981, 32.

released on seventeen studio albums spanning three time periods—1974-78, 1980-87, and 1989-2002—during which the band released similar amounts of music.

Rush provides an especially rich case study of issues concerning the post-counterculture. Thus, the study delves into such cultural topics as institutions, reception, genre, literature, the media, technology, aesthetics, and ideology. This includes the scope and historiographical difficulties of progressive (“prog”) rock vis-à-vis other types of music, privileging virtuosity and metrical/structural constructedness over other complexities, the role of album-oriented rock (AOR) and FM radio as alternatives to Top 40 pop music, music technology (especially synthesizers, samplers, electronic percussion, and computer software), individualism and libertarianism as alternatives to liberalism and conservatism, and the “standard-issue anti-prog-rock bias characteristic of most rock critics.”<sup>4</sup> However, by focusing on a specific artist for an entire book-length study—something remarkably rare in popular music studies—I also harness the capacity of musicology for sustained contextualisations of specific pieces of music.<sup>5</sup>

During the late-1960s’ counterculture, the term “progressive rock” initially made sense as a generic description of a wide variety of music. Thus, the category included eclectic, experimental, post-rhythm-and-blues, live/improvisatory, and psychedelic/acid rock by such U.K. bands as the Beatles, Cream, the Moody Blues, Pink Floyd, Procol Harum, the Soft Machine, and Caravan and such U.S. artists as the Doors, the Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, the Velvet Underground, Jimi Hendrix, and Frank Zappa.

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony DeCurtis, “The A List,” May 2002. Interview: “Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson discuss *Vapor Trails*.” See <http://www.rollingstone.com/videos/playvideo.asp?cid=1555>.

<sup>5</sup> For a full-length musicological study of a specific U.K. rock band, see Susan Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Glenn Pillsbury, “Pure Black, Looking Clear: Genre, Race, Commerce, and the Music of Metallica” (Ph.D. dissertation in musicology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2003).

By comparison, in 1969-70 a more “earnest”—and decidedly more British—type of progressive rock emerged. Each “prog” band revelled in its *own* eclectic range of musical influences—often including classical music, experimental (“art”) music, mainstream and experimental jazz, Tin Pan Alley and contemporary pop, blues and blues-rock, jazz-rock fusion, traditional Anglican church music, U.S. country music, folk music, and other styles. Above all, though, guitarists, bass players, keyboardists, and drummers within this “Anglo” progressive rock stream highlighted their professional “musicianly” skills (e.g., precision and virtuosity) to a degree not previously encountered in mainstream (i.e., commercially viable) rock music. The more commercially successful bands of this type, especially from 1969 to 1974, included Emerson Lake & Palmer, Genesis, Yes, King Crimson, and Jethro Tull. In precisely the same period, successful eclectic U.K. hard rock—or “proto heavy metal”—bands formed (e.g., Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Deep Purple), as did numerous hard rock bands (e.g., ZZ Top, Aerosmith, KISS, and AC/DC) and various progressive-influenced hard rock and Top 40 “arena rock” bands (e.g., Queen, Foreigner, Styx, and Kansas).<sup>6</sup>

Rush probably would not have developed an eccentric “progressive/hard” style without the example of eclectic, “musicianly” progressive rock from 1969-74. However, the band’s music also relates to the influence of blues-oriented hard rock and power-

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<sup>6</sup> My Rush fan surveys suggest that the band’s fans prefer, in descending order of affinity:

- 1970s U.K. progressive rock or eclectic hard rock
- 1970s and 1980s (mostly U.S.) hard rock (“arena rock”)
- 1980s and 1990s U.S. hard rock and heavy metal
- 1980s and/or 1990s U.S. alternative rock

Almost no Rush fans considered the band’s music to be “heavy metal,” and a woman in her late-thirties specifically complained about heavy metal’s 1980s’ tendency towards “slick vanhalenizing.”

I undertook my surveys in 1996 at a pair of Rush concerts at the L.A. Forum in Inglewood, California; in 2000 at a Geddy Lee autograph signing in St. Catharines, Ontario; and in 2001 at a Rush Convention in Toronto, Ontario. I received 161 responses in total.

oriented heavy metal from the same period. On the one hand, Rush peaked commercially in the first half of the 1980s, with its only U.S. Top 40 hit in 1982 (i.e., the #21 “New World Man,” from *Signals*) and its four new studio albums from 1981 to 1985 almost immediately certified as platinum (i.e., U.S. sales of over one million). On the other hand, Rush never functioned as a “one-hit wonder” (a phenomenon otherwise very common in the early 1980s), because the band sold considerably more copies of its earlier albums (1974-81) in the decades *after* its only U.S. Top 40 hit.<sup>7</sup> Rush’s limited Top 40 success parallels that of many progressive rock and heavy metal bands, but it also recalls the fact that David Bowie’s influential albums from the mid- to late-1970s sold at much higher levels after his mainstream commercial “peak” in the early to mid-1980s.<sup>8</sup> Cultural critic Geoff Pevere succinctly summarizes Rush’s career by saying that the band positioned itself “outside of vogue and fashion” and that it toured with “relentless tenacity.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, he refers to Rush’s “brick by brick career,” by which he means that the band played in smaller venues until it reached structural integrity as a headlining act and as a leading purveyor of large arena rock shows.<sup>10</sup> Revealingly, in the late 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s certain new Rush songs charted as high as #1 on *Billboard*’s

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<sup>7</sup> Appendix A lists Rush’s 17 studio albums, 4 live albums, and 5 anthologies; the *Billboard* chart peaks of these albums; and their gold, platinum, and multi-platinum certifications in the United States.

<sup>8</sup> See “Star profiles II: David Bowie” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 198.

<sup>9</sup> Geoff Pevere and Greig Dymond, *Mondo-Canuck: A Canadian Pop Culture Odyssey* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1996), 184.

In its career up to 2002, Rush had sold about 40 million albums and 12 million concert tickets. (From 1981 to 2002, the band’s tours averaged about 72 shows and 12, 000 fans per show.) In 2001, I met a fan who claimed to have attended twenty-four Rush concerts.

<sup>10</sup> Pevere, *Mondo-Canuck*, 160. Appendixes B-C summarize the primary cities and venues of Rush’s touring activities.

“Album Tracks” chart (without ever appearing in the Top 40), and the band’s music similarly fared especially well among listeners of album-oriented rock (“AOR”) radio.<sup>11</sup>

Based on information from album sales, fan surveys, and tour histories one can determine approximate populations for an artist’s hardcore vs. casual fans. In early 2003, Pegi Cecconi, Vice-President of Toronto’s Anthem Entertainment (Rush’s business concern), provided me with Rush album sales “guestimates:” 40 million worldwide, 30 million in the U.S., 5 million in Canada, and much of the remaining 5 million split almost evenly between the U.K., Germany, Japan, and Brazil.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Rush’s success cannot be explained as a mainly Canadian phenomenon, and the band’s music almost never references Canadian topics in any case.<sup>13</sup> The results of my Rush fan surveys suggest that hardcore fans typically had twenty-four copies of various Rush albums, mainly on LPs and CDs. Hardcore Rush fans thus accounted for about two-thirds, or 27 million, of the band’s total album sales by early 2003. This suggests the existence of at least one million hardcore Rush fans worldwide, three-quarters of them in the United States and one-eighth of them in Canada. Casual fans and others, often including friends and relatives of hardcore fans, averaged five or six Rush recordings, which suggests that this category comprised at least an additional two million persons and 13 million in further album sales. Concert information corroborates these figures, with hardcore fans typically attending a Rush concert during about one-half of the band’s tours and casual fans and

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<sup>11</sup> In 1998, album-oriented rock (AOR) ranked second (after adult contemporary but ahead of Top 40 and urban) among 25 to 34 year-old U.S. radio listeners. Album rock radio stations that supported Rush included Cleveland’s WMMS (100.7), Los Angeles’ KLOS (95.5), Houston’s KLOL (101), Toronto’s Q107, and Edmonton’s 100.3 “The Bear.” Some such stations differentiated themselves from “classic rock” (i.e., former Top 40 songs) as “classic rock that *really* rocks.”

<sup>12</sup> Personal email, February 10, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> This differs from other Canadian bands, such as the Tragically Hip, that became highly successful in Canada while remaining virtually unknown in the United States.



others attending about one-quarter of the time (i.e., a 50:50 attendance split). Many Rush fans pointed to their early twenties as the period when the band changed style in a way that prevented their interest in its subsequent music. Due to the band's considerable longevity, this varies anywhere from 1975 to 2002 and thus problematizes the concept of "sell-out." Given the large proportion of amateur musician-fans among my respondents, this phenomenon may stem from individual non-music career paths preventing a continuing level of sustained "musicianly" engagement with later music by the same band. However, many people continued to attend Rush concerts despite their dislike, or lack of interest, in some of the band's music.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1970s Dick Hebdige posited the idea of the intentional construction of subcultural styles. Will Straw later encouraged the idea of scene: "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization."<sup>15</sup> Barry Shank's work centred the idea of "scene" on the rock culture of a specific city.<sup>16</sup> Keith Negus then expanded on this by suggesting that scholars should attempt to uncover the "social processes [that] might contribute to the establishment of audience *alliances*."<sup>17</sup> Along these lines, my Rush fan research indicates that musician-fans comprised about two-thirds of the band's hardcore fans.

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<sup>14</sup> Appendixes D-G summarize certain aspects of the fan surveys.

<sup>15</sup> Will Straw, "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music," in *Cultural Studies* 5.3 (1991): 368-88; quoted in Negus, *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. London: Polity, 1996; reprint, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997, 22.

<sup>16</sup> See Barry Shank, *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Negus, *Popular Music in Theory*, 23.

Although white males encompassed much of this “social alliance,” the figure of two-thirds musician-fans holds across *all* categories of hardcore Rush fans, such as males, females, whites, non-whites, working-class, middle-class, in their forties, and in their teens. These musician-fans included a variety of amateur musicians and professional musicians.<sup>18</sup> If a subculture, scene, or audience alliance makes sense for Rush, it functions mainly for Anglo-American rock musician-fans (plus their friends and relatives) within a technique- and differentiation-oriented, post-industrial post-counterculture. Thus, Rush *itself*, including its hardcore fans, casual fans, and others (such as non-Rush-fans who liked certain songs), comprised a scene of several million people. Additional popular music fans, numbering in the hundreds of millions and including millions of musician-fans and thousands of rock critics with little or no interest in progressive rock, hard rock, and/or heavy metal, fell into scenes other than Rush’s.

For example, in July of 2003, Rush played a selection of 1977-91 album rock songs in front of nearly 500, 000 rock music fans at a post-SARS mega-concert in its hometown: “Molson Canadian Rocks for Toronto.”<sup>19</sup> Third-billed (and third-last) Rush began with its best-known song, “Tom Sawyer” (1981). Later, the band introduced its performance of “The Spirit of Radio” (1980) with an instrumental rendition of the Rolling Stones’ “Paint It Black” (1966). I noticed that many concert-goers, who were overwhelmingly fans of artists other than Rush, appreciated the band’s “progressive

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<sup>18</sup> Appendix H lists a number of professional musicians who have demonstrated an interest in at least some of Rush’s music.

<sup>19</sup> The ten-hour event also featured the Rolling Stones (U.K.), AC/DC (Australia), Rush’s fellow Canadians the Guess Who and Blue Rodeo, and shorter sets by Canadians Katherine Edwards, La Chicane, Sass Jordan, Sam Roberts, and the Tea Party, by U.S. artists the Flaming Lips, the Isley Brothers, and Justin Timberlake, and by a Blues Brothers revival called the Have Love Will Travel Revue, fronted by Canadian comedian Dan Aykroyd and U.S. comedian Jim Belushi. Even the headlining act, the Rolling Stones, had never played at an event this large.

rock” musicianship, interplay, and complexity but that only a few people in such a large, general audience knew enough of the band’s lyrics to sing along with most of the other songs. By comparison, most people—including a surprising number of teenagers—knew many of the lyrics of the classic rock songs—i.e., classic *Top 40* rock songs—performed by second-billed AC/DC and the first-billed Rolling Stones. On the other hand, tens of thousands of Rush fans probably attended the concert.

To apply some terms from Will Straw, Rush explored a “range of musical practices,” “varying trajectories of change,” and “cross-fertilization.” To apply some terms from Keith Negus, Rush functioned as a “synthesist,” drawing on emerging cultural elements—thus influencing lyrics *and* music—and “blend[ing] them in such a way so as to create a new distinct musical identity.”<sup>20</sup> Rush continued to synthesise its identity over several decades, which reinforced its pedagogical status among its hardcore musician-fans. The band’s “permanent change” retained certain tendencies, such as individualism, semi-literary lyrics, and instrumental virtuosity. On the other hand, the band also engaged with other musical styles (e.g., post-punk, synth-pop, and alternative rock) and other lyrical themes (e.g., relationships and the environment). Rush’s lyrics provide important meanings in most of the band’s songs.<sup>21</sup> However, Rush’s music reveals at least as much as its lyrics. Thus, I often engage with the band’s ideologically revealing instrumental sections, which introduce textural, metrical, rhythmic, tonal, tempo, and/or dynamic changes to address things otherwise avoided musically and lyrically in the same song. The importance of the *music* of Rush’s music also prompted my use of song-summarizing style charts and selected excerpts of musical notation, in addition to

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<sup>20</sup> Negus, *Popular Music in Theory*, 146-47.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix J for “reading lists” concerning the band’s lyricist.

discussions of lyrics, album covers, and other topics.<sup>22</sup> I investigate a lot of things, but I also interpret a large number of songs in a considerable amount of cultural detail.

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<sup>22</sup> The style charts appear within the complete lists of songs provided in Appendix K

## Chapter 1—Cast in This Unlikely Role: Song Interpretations and Cultural Musicology

Look at Alfred Hitchcock. He had a long career; made about eighty films. Some were really popular, others not, but he kept going. He had enough confidence in his ability to know that he was not going to disappear overnight. He saw it as a long-term thing, which allowed him to experiment. Whether or not a project was accepted by the masses, he always had a core following.<sup>1</sup>

-Rush's bassist-singer-keyboardist Geddy Lee, 1991

Geddy Lee's comparison of Rush's career with that of Anglo-American filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock reveals a great deal. Film studies scholars often took the work of Hitchcock and other long-term "auteurs" the most seriously. Auteur theory dates to the early writings of the late-1950s' and early-1960s' French New Wave critic-director François Truffaut, and others later applied it to European and North American directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman, Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, and David Cronenberg. One of the main concerns of such an approach was to differentiate certain directors' "intentions" from "mere" commercial work. It might seem ironic to transfer aspects of auteur theory to a context in which three people create music collectively. However, although I focus on Rush's music within this study, I have not chosen to do so in order to prove that this band's music is "better" than anyone else's. Furthermore, filmmaking and rock music are both highly collaborative and involve a wide variety of processes and people.

Whether or not it qualifies as "auteur" studies (or needs to), this study interprets music by a long-term popular music artist. As with particular directors' ideological

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Widders-Ellis, article-interview with Lee, "Rush Redefined," *Guitar Player*, Nov. 1991, 33-38+. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gp1191.html>. Elsewhere, Lee referred to the longevity of another popular entertainer: "I guess we're like Sammy Davis Jr. He didn't get into it to make a couple of records either." Bill Reynolds, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "Rush: A Show of Hands," *Canadian Musician*, February 1989, ca 40.

and/or stylistic approaches, Rush's music achieved mainstream-level success despite the fact that it resonated semi-thematically in ways that paralleled the aesthetic approaches of certain film directors. For example, Alfred Hitchcock's suspense-thrillers often involve elaborate narratives surrounding unusual domestic situations, mistaken or secret identities, and intensely dramatic *dénouements*. In a different idiom, Martin Scorsese's films generally concern a driven, individual male attempting to reconcile a personal mission with a particular religious background or other belief system, most often Roman Catholicism. Similarly, a modified- or semi-auteur status makes sense for Rush if one considers that the same person wrote nearly all of the band's lyrics. (I summarize that in the next section of this chapter.) However, the band's collaborative *music* activities simultaneously deflect this. Rush's music often includes elements of structural/metrical complexity and instrumental virtuosity, and the band tended to incorporate extensive instrumental material in order to mask or undercode its point-of-view and to facilitate multiple levels of interpretation for its listeners. Thus, my task in this study involves balancing an aesthetic approach derived from auteur studies with considerations of ideological, cultural, and various additional interpretive factors. My lines of investigation include not only "What is Rush's characteristic sound-aesthetic?," but also "Why is this Rush's characteristic sound-aesthetic?," "To whom does it appeal?," and "Why does it appeal to them?"

### **(Semi-)Literary Contexts**

As undergraduates, my friends and I found the existence of the Students for Objectivism (i.e., followers of Ayn Rand's philosophy) somewhat troubling. We had probably all read her novel *The Fountainhead* (1943), but in those heady, formative

years of sorting out political correctness vis-à-vis our future places in the world, it seemed untenable that individuals could matter more than society. Later, when I decided to write about the ideological, musical, and stylistic/genre contexts of Rush, I knew that I would have to deal with the “Rand problem” at some point. However, the vast majority of Rush’s 135 “songs with words” (1975-2002, the vast majority with lyrics by Neil Peart) have very little—usually nothing—to do with Rand. In their need for a post-countercultural scapegoat, many rock critics and some popular music scholars expanded the association considerably out of proportion.

Some Rush songs, especially certain ones discussed in Chapter 3, demonstrate Peart’s early affinity for specifically Randian individualism. These include the title and selfishness lyrics of “Anthem” (1975) and certain aspects of the Rand-related epic “2112” (1976). Also, “Xanadu” and “Cygnus X-1” (both 1977) respectively apply something like Randian-style individualism to a variant of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” (1798) and to a science-fiction narrative based around a black hole. As discussed in Chapter 4, “Countdown” (1982) not only bridges Rush’s enthusiasm for general technology (i.e., NASA’s space shuttle program) with its growing use of music technology but it also parallels Rand’s enthusiasm for NASA’s Apollo 11 (1969). Rand suggested that Apollonian rationalism (Apollo 11) must triumph over Dionysian collectivism (the 1969 Woodstock rock festival). By comparison, both Friedrich Nietzsche (who originated the Apollo/Dionysus “split” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872) and Neil Peart (e.g., in “Hemispheres,” 1978) favour a more balanced approach—indeed, some of Rush’s earliest musical influences played at Woodstock: Jimi Hendrix and the Who. Moreover, the band’s song “Closer to the Heart” (1977, lyrics co-written by Neil Peart and Peter Talbot) says “Philosophers and ploughmen, each

must know his *part*,” thus functioning as an anthem of anti-collectivist, post-countercultural diversity *and* of meaningful contributions to society. Paul Stump misquotes the relevant lyric as “each must know his *place*,” which obviously means something quite different (i.e., authoritarianism or fascism).<sup>2</sup>

Rush’s “The Trees” (1978) provides a political allegory against affirmative action or, arguably, against the Canadian content (radio/television) regulations implemented in the early 1970s. Thus, Peart positions himself not so much against equality as against *artificially constructed* equality. This is libertarian, not Randian, and, revealingly, Peart later described himself as a “left-wing libertarian.” Nevertheless, in a 1978 article about Rush, rock critic Miles of the U.K. *New Musical Express* called Rush “proto-fascist” without mentioning any songs to support this claim.<sup>3</sup> Verse 2 of Rush’s “Tom Sawyer” (1981) refers to the “Randian” notion of neither god nor government being worthy of one’s mind, and the same verse refers to change (e.g., ideological and stylistic) as a permanent strategy. “Red Barchetta” (also 1981) provides a near-future narrative about semi-anarchically taking a preserved sports car out for a joy ride (and/or dreaming about this). These and other songs suggest that Rush wished to make its own mistakes, which inadvertently provided “role-model” inspiration for like-minded musician-fans and for various workers and professionals in the post-counterculture. Interpreting Rush as a “recruiter,” as do Carol Selby Price and Robert M. Price (regarding “Tom Sawyer”) plays into the hands of rock critics and others who always manage to find fascism in Rush (and in Rand).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stump, *The Music’s All That Matters: A History of Progressive Rock* (London: Quartet, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Miles, *New Musical Express*, 4 March 1978: <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=699>.

<sup>4</sup> On “Tom Sawyer” as recruitment, see Carol Selby Price and Robert M. Price, *Mystic Rhythms: The Philosophical Vision of Rush* (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Wildside Press, 1999; originally published by



“The Weapon” (1982, Part 2 of “Fear”) demonstrates Peart’s interest in depicting personal fear and paranoia and partly addresses his concern that so many of his fellow humans let religious movements and governments keep them in a blissful ignorance. This may be Randian, but it is also Orwellian and many other things, such as libertarian. “Distant Early Warning” (1984) merges late-Cold-War imagery with concerns for others, as in the song’s chorus:

The world weighs on my shoulders, but what am I to do?  
You sometimes drive me crazy, but I worry about you.  
I know it makes no difference to what you’re going through,  
but I see the tip of the iceberg, and I worry about you.

The first line may refer to Rand’s novel *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), but the lyrics otherwise suggest Rush’s opening up to the idea of serious, relationship-oriented “love songs.” “Marathon” (1985) and “Mission” (1987) inscribe perseverance, but in this respect Peart referred most often to Ernest Hemingway as a literary influence. “Losing It” (1982) models its writer after Hemingway, and the album title of *Grace under Pressure* (1984) derives from Hemingway’s 1929 definition of “guts.”

Peart occasionally used religious imagery, such as the concluding words of “Distant Early Warning” (1984)—“Absalom, Absalom, Absalom.” However, he mainly uses the word as a play-on-words on “obsolete” and “absolute” and also as a reference to William Faulkner’s 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!* In interviews, Peart clarified that the word came up poetically and that he kept it once he became familiar with the Old Testament context of King David’s estranged-then-deceased son. Peart appreciated some of the symbolism and language of religion, such as monasteries, candles, traditional liturgical music, and the “old English” of the King James Bible.

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Woodstock Press as volume 2 of *Popular Music of Today*, 1998), 45.

“The Big Wheel” (1991) refers semi-autobiographically to a kid who does a “slow fade” from a “ready-made faith” and chases “something new to believe in.” By the 1990s, Peart considered himself an agnostic, and he accepted the truth of random contingencies. The latter point certainly limits the extent to which one could still consider the early-1990s Peart philosophically attuned to Rand’s ideas. The death of his only child (Selena, b. 1978) in a single-car traffic accident in 1997 and the death of his spouse (Jacqueline Taylor) of cancer in 1998 would then have considerably reinforced his belief in random contingencies. Moreover, some Rush songs from the late-1980s and 1990s indicate Peart’s concern for nature and the environment, and he also wrote a number of lyrics containing humorous passages. Nonetheless, Edward Macan, on the basis of his dislike for heavy metal, his obsession with progressive rock connecting to the counterculture, and, especially, his belief that Rush “repeatedly referenced” Ayn Rand, refuses to accept any of Rush’s music as progressive rock.<sup>5</sup>

All three members of Rush demonstrated at least some interest in reading. For example, Lee and Lifeson sometimes read contemporary bestsellers. However, Peart read an exceptionally wide variety of authors and books (see Appendix J). By 2002, he had read books and articles by hundreds of fiction and non-fiction writers, including ancient and Middle English mythology; 19<sup>th</sup> century classic novels; modern and contemporary North American, European, and world literature; literary travelogues (including London, Steinbeck, and Kerouac); and psychology, science, nature, birds, art, cars, and motorcycles. (He read comparatively little non-fiction about music and, contrary to pervading opinion, only a small amount of science-fiction or Ayn Rand.)

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<sup>5</sup> Macan argues that Rush’s “[heavy] metal leanings, as well as the repeated references to Ayn Rand in [its] most musically progressive albums [call into doubt the band’s] prog[ressive] status.” Mike Doherty, “Just say Yes,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 July 2001, R1, R7.

By 2002, he had also written several books (and numerous articles) himself, including one on African drums and a pair of literary travelogues—*The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa* (1996) and, after his personal tragedies of 1997-98, *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road* (2002). In these books, as in late-1980s' and 1990s' interviews, Peart often refers to other music and/or authors (e.g., jazz and Jack London) but to Ayn Rand only occasionally in passing. This suggests a developing, “progressive” openness to real people and real situations that increasingly flew in the face of Ayn Rand’s worldview. Peart favoured conceptual words about individuals in the world (i.e., we/us/our, dream, light, will, change, high, fear, wonder, mind) and downplayed “confrontational” pronouns, verbs, and interjections (i.e., I/me/my, you/your, say/said, feel, yeah, need). After 1980 he considerably scaled back his use of noun/verb hybrids applicable to individualism (e.g., will, fear, mind, and wonder) and increased his use of words indicating response or change (e.g., turn), nature (e.g., sun), and women (e.g., her). Starting in 1982, he used the words “her” and “his” almost exclusively to refer to real (though generally still fictional) people and not to anthropomorphize things. A number of Peart’s lyrics from 1982 to 2002 address both male and female perspectives or else remain gender-neutral.

### **Canadian and Other Anglo-American Contexts**

Rush’s music inscribes an eccentric “triple core” of hard rock, heavy metal, and progressive rock, plus occasional, temporary stylistic peripheries. Among other things, this semi-contained yet stylistically evolutionary approach resists a variety of other ways of making music. Michel Foucault suggests that “mobile and transitory points of

resistance” produce “cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.”<sup>6</sup> Related to this, Rush resisted the power structures of the music industry—in which it nonetheless consistently participated—and marked off its irreducible-yet-flexible progressive/hard rock region by incorporating elaborate unison, contrapuntal, and/or complex riff-based instrumental elements. This also articulated a unique solution to the “popular music paradox” of individualism vs. collectivism.

Revealingly, of the fifty-one songs that Rush released both in studio and live versions (excluding several medleys and similarly incomplete excerpts), ten varied in duration from studio to live versions by 0-2 seconds, ten by 3-6 seconds, ten by 8-20 seconds, ten by 21-27 seconds, five by 33-40 seconds, and only six by 48 seconds or more (see also Appendix K). These 51 songs averaged 5:40 in their original studio versions and, excluding banter and applause, only 5:47 live. On average, that extra seven seconds reflects the slightly expanded song-ending flourishes characteristic of many live performances. Unlike many hard rock bands, including ones that directly influenced Rush (such as Cream and Led Zeppelin), Rush mainly composed its songs as studio-version “texts” and reproduced these songs live instead of live jamming in order to make new song versions through improvisation. (The band occasionally made “micro-level” changes that did not affect the overall structure of a song.) Rush often composed individual song sections through improvisational techniques during an album’s “pre-production” (e.g., Lee and Lifeson jamming while Peart mainly worked

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 96. Quoted in Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 79.

on lyrics). However, by the late 1970s the band assembled these sections into completed songs (i.e., merging music and words) and refined the material over several months (e.g., Lifeson completing his guitar solos) before meeting with a co-producer and engineer in a professional recording studio.<sup>7</sup> Despite this progressive rock interest in “constructed” music, many of Rush’s songs also engage with hard rock and heavy metal, and some of them use occasional stylistic fragments from a wide variety of additional Anglo-American, African-American, and other types of music.

Rush’s longevity, its reasonably consistent output of new material, and its evolutionary stylistic tendencies caused mail-order/web-based music clubs (such as Columbia House and BMG) some difficulty in where to place the band in their materials. Thus, Rush wandered among such categories as “classic rock,” “rock and pop,” “hard rock,” and “heavy metal.” Simon Frith refers to labels of this type only being “noticeable, in fact, when we want a book or video or magazine *that doesn’t fit* and suddenly don’t know where to find it.”<sup>8</sup> Rush provides a useful genre-ambiguity case study, but the band’s ambiguity, especially its historiographic ambiguity, also stems from its status as Canadian. Lee’s and Lifeson’s parents immigrated to Canada from Europe in the 1940s, and by the time Rush formed in the late 1960s Canada had officially established a policy of multiculturalism, which contrasts the tendency in the U.S. towards a cultural “melting pot.” Rush’s guitarist Alex Lifeson once said: “It’s made a difference that we’re Canadian. Our natures are different from Americans, so

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<sup>7</sup> Rush often composed its music using multi-track cassette-based equipment in the early 1980s, MIDI software and synthesizer/sampling equipment in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and digital audio tape (DAT) and hard disk recording in the later 1990s and early 2000s.

<sup>8</sup> See Simon Frith, Chapter 4, “Genre Rules,” in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 75.

we tend to be a little more flexible.”<sup>9</sup> This parallels the arguments of Canadian media philosopher Marshall McLuhan about Canada’s “flexible” and “philosophic or cool” identity vis-à-vis the United States.<sup>10</sup> On the issue of “coolness,” many critics have said much the same thing about Rush, and I have similarly heard people call it an “art band” or “intellectual rock.” On the other hand, the band’s interest in a wide variety of secondary stylistic elements falls under the rubric “flexible,” but not necessarily “cool and philosophic.” Although the band sold about 40 million albums between 1974 and 2003 (with 22 albums having received gold, platinum, and/or multi-platinum certifications in the U.S.), the vast majority of rock historians understandably exclude, or at best only slightly mention, Rush.

By engaging in varied cultural and aesthetic issues over a long period of time while basing its artistic and business activities in Canada (i.e., Anthem Records a.k.a. Anthem Entertainment and SRO Productions), Rush’s career most closely resembles that of internationally successful Canadian novelists such as Margaret Atwood (b. 1939). Atwood’s several dozen major publications of novels, poetry, and short stories similarly span several decades, and as with her genre-bending approach to irony- and metaphor-driven character stories (e.g., invoking complex relationships, fantasy, science-fiction, and/or historical tropes) understanding Rush’s music involves grappling with various ideological/stylistic issues. These involve semi-literary, middle-brow, individualist, post-countercultural, Anglo-American, progressive-hard-metallic musicians’ rock. Also like Atwood, Rush’s music only occasionally and subtly invokes

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<sup>9</sup> Dan Hedges, article-interview with Lifeson, “Rush Relives 18 Years of Wide-Screen Rock,” *Circus*, 30 April 1992. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/circus0492.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall McLuhan, “Canada: The Borderline Case,” in *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, ed. David Staines (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1977), 247.

overtly Canadian contexts, such as certain locations in some of its songs and album covers and in most of its awards and recording activities. By pursuing album-oriented “musicians’ rock,” the band appealed beyond Canada’s borders.

In addition to its primary fan base in the U.S. and Canada, Rush also enjoyed secondary fan communities, and occasionally played live, in the U.K., Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Japan, Mexico, and Brazil—where it played three shows for 120, 000 fans in 2002. However, its largest fan communities and its performing and recording activities otherwise reinforced its Anglo-American context. Arguably, this relates to the band’s homeland, but also to Canada’s—and Rush’s—combination of U.K. tendencies (e.g., Elizabeth II as figurehead, universal health coverage, and progressive rock) with U.S. tendencies (e.g., individualism rights and freedoms, libertarianism, and arena rock). Despite its extensive album sales and tours, though, other than album certifications, occasional humorous acknowledgements (e.g., the Harvard Lampoon’s 1993 induction of Rush as “Musicians of the Millennium” and references on TV’s “Mystery Science Theater 3000”), and frequent feature articles in musicians’ magazines, Rush enjoyed very little mainstream visibility in the United States.

Although Rush had only one Top 40 hit in the U.S. (1982’s “New World Man” at #21) and never won a Grammy, certain Canadian cultural institutions compensated for this. In Canada, the band had several Top 10 hits, including 1982’s “New World Man” at #1. It also won eight “Canadian Grammy” Juno awards—Most Promising Group, 1975; Group of the Year, 1978 and 1979; Group of the Decade for the 1980s; Best Hard Rock/Metal Album, 1991 (for *Presto*); Best Hard Rock Album, 1992 (for *Roll the Bones*); and several for Hugh Syme’s Rush album designs. In addition, the

Government of Canada named the band “Ambassadors of Music” in 1979, and the band won the Toronto Music Awards Mayor’s Award in 1990, SOCAN’s Harold Moon songwriting award in 1992, the Toronto’s Arts Award in 1993, a place in the Canadian Music Juno Hall of Fame in 1994, memberships in the Order of Canada (the nation’s highest civic honour) in 1997, a star on Canada’s Walk of Fame in 1999, “Most Important Canadian Musicians of All Time” (*JAM!* online poll) in 2000, and a place in Canada’s Music Industry Hall of Fame in 2003. The band also helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the United Way, UNICEF, AIDS charities, Artists Against Racism, and others, and in 2003 it donated a collection of vintage instruments, stage props, equipment, awards, and memorabilia to the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

From 1973 to 1976 Rush recorded its studio albums in Toronto, exclusively at Toronto Sound from 1974 to 1976. In 1977 and 1978, the band recorded mainly at Rockfield Studios in Wales (but also partly in London in 1978). From 1979 to 1984, it recorded exclusively at Le Studio in Morin Heights, Quebec. In 1985 and 1987, the band recorded at several locations in the U.K. and at Air Studios on the West Indies (U.K.) island of Montserrat (plus partly at Toronto’s McClear Place in 1987). In 1989, 1991, and 1993 it recorded at a combination of Quebec’s Le Studio and Toronto’s McClear Place (a.k.a. McClear Pathé) and in 1996 at a combination of Toronto’s McClear Pathé and Reaction Studios and mid-state New York’s Bearsville Studio. In 2001, Rush recorded at Toronto’s Reaction Studio. The band supervised the mixing of its various albums at additional locations in Canada, the U.S., and/or the U.K., and it also mastered its albums in these countries. All five of the band’s co-producers came from the U.K. or Canada, and the band’s 1973-83 co-producer, Terry Brown, had earlier moved to Canada from the U.K.



For *All the World's a Stage* (the first of Rush's live albums, 1976), the band selected song recordings from three shows at Toronto's Massey Hall. For *Exit . . . Stage Left* (live, 1981), the band chose its song selections from recent arena recordings in Canada and the U.K. For *A Show of Hands* (live, 1989), it selected song recordings from 1988 U.K. recordings at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre (over half of the album) and 1986-88 U.S. recordings at Phoenix's Veterans Memorial Coliseum, New Jersey's Meadowlands Arena, New Orleans' Lakefront Arena, and San Diego's Sports Arena.<sup>11</sup> For *Different Stages* (live, 1998), Rush used song recordings mainly from a single show at Chicago's World Amphitheater (June 14, 1997). However, the double-CD also includes at least one 1994 or 1997 song performance from each of Philadelphia's Corestates Center, the Miami Arena, Dallas's Starplex Amphitheatre, Mansfield's (Massachusetts) Great Woods Amphitheatre, Detroit's Palace Auburn Hills, and Toronto's Molson Amphitheatre. The album's third ("bonus") CD features selections from a February 20, 1978 show at London's Hammersmith Odeon theatre. Thus, the band's fourth live album combined aspects of its first three by including recordings from all three countries.<sup>12</sup> In this any other ways, the band found itself coming to terms with its own history and with its primary fan communities. Moreover, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, Rush, other musicians, and even some rock critics also came to terms with the band's music.

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<sup>11</sup> The three Birmingham shows were combined for Rush's live video, *A Show of Hands* (1989).

<sup>12</sup> For reasons of cost issues, Rush refrained from transporting its show from North America to Europe after 1992. However, it also played in Japan in 1984 and in Mexico and Brazil in 2002.

### **Coming to Terms: Rush Itself**

In its 1996-97 concert tour, Rush moved somewhat closer to the aesthetic of “live classics” by playing some of its earlier studio works for the first time in fifteen or twenty years. Hardcore musician-fans especially savoured the complete performances of an extended work from 1976 (“2112”) and a mini-epic from 1980 (“Natural Science”). Also, the tour featured a fairly long show, with an intermission but with no opening act—the latter virtually unprecedented, because Rush had always supported its colleagues in recognition of its own professional “starting out” years, 1973-77. The resultant live album, *Different Stages* (1998) includes a complete rendition (i.e., two CDs) of the band’s recent repertoire. By comparison, Rush heavily biased its three earlier live albums towards fairly recent material, often by omitting older songs that it *had* recently performed. As a further example of its tendency towards rationalism, Rush released each of its first four live albums after a grouping of four studio albums.

As with other hard rock bands, Rush initially resisted the release of conflicting live versions of individual songs.<sup>13</sup> For example, only one song (written in 1977) appears twice among the band’s first three live albums (1976, 1981, and 1989).<sup>14</sup> By comparison, the two CDs of 1993-97 performances on *Different Stage* (1998) include six of twenty-two songs that had already appeared on one of the two previous live albums. The album also includes a complete performance of “2112” (the 1976 extended work that also appears in part on the band’s first live album) as well as a 1990s’ rendition of “Closer to the Heart” (1977, the only song that appeared on *both* of

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<sup>13</sup> Some people compensated for this by recording and distributing bootleg Rush recordings.

<sup>14</sup> Similarly, KISS’s *Alive II* (1977) does not include any of the songs included on *Alive!* (1975).

the band's two previous live albums).<sup>15</sup> The "bonus" (third) CD adds seven of eleven additional performances, recorded in 1978, of songs that had already appeared in performances on the band's first live album. Significantly, it includes not only one song, "Xanadu" (1977), that later appeared on the band's second live album (1981) but three additional 1977 songs, "A Farewell to Kings," "Cygnus X-1," and "Cinderella Man," that appeared on *no* previous Rush live album.

Including the material recorded in 1978, Rush's 1998 live album includes twenty-one performances of songs originally from 1974-82 but only twelve performances of songs originally from 1984-96. Even excluding the 1978 disc, Rush's live recordings from the 1990s provide the equivalent of a full CD of music originally from the band's classic period of 1976-82. Also, the three CDs contain nearly four hours of music—which is about the same as the three earlier live albums combined. By 1998 the band wished to acknowledge the classic "album rock" status of a substantial portion of its earlier music for its hardcore fans (i.e., the people who would buy such an album). On the other hand, humorous aspects of its 2002 concert tour encores of the early/extended songs "Working Man" (1971-74), "By-Tor & the Snow Dog" (1974-75), and "Cygnus X-1" (1977) suggests that the band no longer wished to take its earliest material *too* seriously. About a year later, at the comparatively mainstream July 2003 Toronto mega-concert, Rush recognized the "classic rock" status of some its early-1980s' songs (especially in Canada, where a number of its songs charted near the top of the Top 40) by excluding early/extended material and comprising 85% of its set from better-known songs originally released between 1977 and 1981 (e.g., "Closer to the Heart," "The Spirit of Radio," "Freewill," "Tom Sawyer," "Limelight," and "YYZ.")

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<sup>15</sup> Rush retired "Closer to the Heart" for its 2002 tour, but reprised it for a July 2003 performance.

### Coming to Terms: Musician-Fans

In his 1980 U.S. #1 hit, Billy Joel suggested that “It’s Still Rock and Roll to Me.” Arguably, that song’s appropriation of and homage to post-punk music reflects a certain degree of textual/stylistic *overcoding*. By comparison, Rush’s musical *undercoding*, as in “The Spirit of Radio” (1980, #51) and the “Tom Sawyer” (1981, #44), led to an ongoing engagement with those songs. David Brackett similarly discusses Gary Lewis and the Playboys’ 1965 #1 pop hit “This Diamond Ring” and Wilson Pickett’s 1965 #21 rhythm-and-blues/soul classic “In the Midnight Hour.” Regarding “The Spirit of Radio,” other than the Barenaked Ladies’ reference to the song’s energy riff, from 1994 to 2002 U.S. violinist Rachel Barton, additional U.S. string musicians, U.S. heavy metal band Premonition, and the U.K. alternative bands Catherine Wheel, St. Etienne, and Rosetta Stone all engaged with aspects of that song. Regarding “Tom Sawyer,” other than the Barenaked Ladies’ reference to the song’s swagger riff and the trip-hop remix by DJ Z-Trip and death metal version by Disarray also discussed in Chapter 4, in the early 2000s samples from it underscored a Nissan Maxima TV ad, the band Deadsy released its progressive-industrial version, and classical musicians created a strings-based instrumental version.<sup>16</sup> Exemplifying Rush’s influence on a highly diverse field of musicians, in 1996 progressive-oriented hard rock and heavy metal musicians released the Rush tribute album *Working Man*, in 1999 heavy metal and death metal musicians released the quite different *Red Star: Tribute to Rush* (including Disarray’s version of “Tom Sawyer”), and in 2002 classical string musicians released yet another contrast—*Exit Stage Right . . . The String Quartet*

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<sup>16</sup> An MP3 audio file of my “meta-remix” of six highly contrasting versions of “Tom Sawyer” appears at the bottom of the following web page: <http://durrellbowman.com/dissexamples.html>.

*Tribute to Rush* (including versions of “The Spirit of Radio” and “Tom Sawyer”).

Other musicians, including former Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid, jazz pianist Dave Restivo, and several hip-hop artists, also engaged with Rush songs in that period (see also Appendix H).

Rush used relatively subtle classical elements in a few songs between 1985 and ‘93, including a wordless choir, a brass section, and several string sections. This sort of thing dates to the late-1960s and early-’70s (Procol Harum, for example), but it also enjoyed something of a revival in the late 1990s and early 2000s—Metallica’s *S&M* (1999), the 2003 Grammy awards ceremony, and so on. However, a different sort of fusion—spearheaded by the Finnish four-cello ensemble Apocalyptica—involved fully translating hard rock songs *into* something more like classical music. As far as I know, the first recorded instance of translating a Rush song entirely into classical instrumentation appears on Chicago-based classical violinist Rachel Barton’s cleverly named Stringendo album, *Storming the Citadel* (1997-98). Barton grew up listening to rock music, still liked some of it, and wanted to play it. In her string trio version of “The Spirit of Radio,” she effectively uses pizzicato technique to convey the stripped-down, reggae-influenced elements of the original song’s ending. She skips Lifeson’s guitar solo, however, and goes directly into the song’s rock ‘n’ roll-inflected ending, including textural (pizzicato) approximations of the percussive piano part.

*Exit . . . Stage Right: The String Quartet Tribute to Rush* (2002) references the title, cover, and song order of Rush’s second live album of four, 1981’s *Exit . . . Stage Left*. Nashville-based producer-musician Todd Mark Rubenstein applied multi-track recording, sampling, and similar studio technology to “beef up” his transcriptions of the original elements. The opening track provides a classical-type version of “The Spirit of

Radio” to compete with Barton’s. Unlike Barton’s version, Rubenstein’s includes an approximation of Lifeson’s chattering/wah-wah guitar solo—not a very convincing approximation, as electric guitars decidedly facilitate things that acoustic violins do not. Barton’s earlier version of “The Spirit of Radio” succeeds better than the one on *Exit . . . Stage Right*, because she arranged for live string trio what Rush plays with a live rock trio. On the other hand, the U.S. Recording Academy accepted a first-round nomination for *Exit . . . Stage Right* for the 2003 “Best Pop Instrumental Album” Grammy—an odd category given the hard rock origins of the music and also odd given that Rush itself never won a Grammy, although second-rounded for its 1981 and 1991 rock instrumentals, “YYZ” and “Where’s My Thing?” (Unlike those Rush instrumentals, *Exit . . . Stage Right* did not make it to its category’s final vote.)

Unlike all rock-oriented Rush tribute songs, Barton’s arrangement of “The Spirit of Radio” and the dozen arrangements of Rush songs on *Exit . . . Stage Right* present nothing equivalent to Neil Peart’s drumming *or* lyrics. However, even without those seemingly central elements, Rush’s music from 1975-81 still translates quite well into the classical medium. This results from the band’s “classic” period of especially progressive-oriented influences—elaborate solos and instrumental sections as well as varied textures, rhythms, time signatures, instrumentations, and dynamics. (Oddly, *Exit . . . Stage Right* excludes only the closing song of Rush’s *Exit . . . Stage Left*, the 1978 extended *instrumental* work “La Villa Strangiato.”) Robert Walser indicates that heavy metal musicians often drew on resources made available “through mass mediation and their own historical study” in order to create dramatic, noisy interpretations of time-honoured classical music.<sup>17</sup> A wide variety of rock tribute artists, including bands that

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<sup>17</sup> See Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Wesleyan University Press: Hanover, NH, 1993), 105.

covered Rush songs, accomplish something similar in finding variable, refractive, distorted, and disruptive meanings in recent *non*-classical music. On the other hand, the *string* versions of various Rush songs differ in aesthetic intention (e.g., technical accuracy and gestural energy) from James Last's easy listening orchestral versions, for example, of punk rock songs by the Sex Pistols.<sup>18</sup> In any case, however, in an unexpected breadth of dialogue concerning the music of Rush, tribute artists hail from a field of activities itself inscribing considerable ideological *and* literal noise. This includes the electronic sounds and digital manipulations of trip-hop, the distortions and demonic vocals of death metal, and the bows-on-strings noise of classical music.

### **Coming to Terms: Rock Critics**

Cultural commentators in the early 2000s, most of whom who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, proved unwilling to give the decade of the 1970s its due: "While people 10 years our senior grew up with Dylan, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, we had to make do with the Captain & Tennille, John Denver and—say it ain't so—Disco Tex & His Sex-O-Lettes."<sup>19</sup> Instead of contributing to an understanding of what took place during the post-counterculture, writers such as the one just cited complain about having missed the 1960s. Although many rock fans found progressive-oriented rock music too "earnest," just as many found punk rock insufficiently musical and excessively confrontational. The many rock fans left largely unaccounted for by historians, commentators, and critics had spokespersons instead in technique-oriented

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<sup>18</sup> Simon Frith refers to Last's recordings in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96.

<sup>19</sup> Joel Rubinoff, "That '70s generation," *The Record* (Kitchener, Ontario), 4 Aug. 2001, F4.

music and musicians—heavy metal, hard rock, progressive rock, and, prominently among them, Rush’s unique fusion of these styles with individualism and other topics.

The few rock critics who wrote about Rush’s music—even those who disliked it—generally recognized the band’s extension of 1970s’ heavy metal into other areas. Early published descriptions of the band’s music began with genres such hard rock, heavy metal, or blues-rock (1974-77), but they later acknowledged that the band’s musical elements moved beyond heavy metal guitar riffs (1976-78) and eventually referred to progressive rock (1979), classical and jazz undertones (1980), and tech[no]-rock (1980-84). General music writers and cultural commentators from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s then commonly—and unselfconsciously—used the word “progressive” to account for Rush’s ongoing “musicianly” ideology-aesthetic. As early as the late-1970s, though, a few writers recognized that Rush answered some sort of “need.” For example, in 1979 *New York Times* music critic John Rockwell said:

Even if Rush feels a bit miffed about the way it’s ignored by the supposed tastemakers of rock, it can take consolation in its audience’s enthusiasm. Rush play[s] . . . tight, energetic progressive rock with a strong science-fiction overlay. . . . To this taste, the whole thing seems busy and empty in the manner of too many of these souped-up, neo-King Crimson outfits. But there can be no denying that Rush answers some sort of need, and answers it with crisp, professional dispatch.<sup>20</sup>

*Creem*’s Joe Fernbacher, in his colourful—if somewhat incomprehensible—1986 review of Rush’s album *Power Windows* (*Billboard* #10, 1985), demonstrates later critics’ grudgingly tempered attitude towards the band:

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<sup>20</sup> John Rockwell, “Pop: Rush Plays at Palladium,” review of Rush, *New York Times*, 13 January 1979. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/nytimes\\_011579.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/nytimes_011579.html).



I once thought of Rush as an “amazingly crispless” band, and my opinion really hasn’t changed that much since then. . . . I find myself in moments of extreme concentration actually, begrudgingly, liking this latest effort by these hodad metaloids. . . . Musically speaking, *Power Windows* is infectious, driving, slick beyond a reasonable doubt, adverb-inducing, and once in a while unnervingly possessed of blinding likeability. . . . One positive thing lyrically is that here at last is a borderline metal LP without the obligatory love song a.k.a. fantasy epic into the Stygian depths of teen brooding and the inevitable link up with the rhythms of Tophet. . . . [The album] doesn’t eat the big one, and Rush, though still “crispless,” are no longer amazingly so. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Note that unlike Fernbacher, Rockwell had earlier used the term “crisp” as a comparatively positive indicator of Rush’s music and cultural work. Also in 1986, *Rolling Stone*’s David Fricke provided an unusually salient (given the Rush-ambivalent forum) overview of the band’s mid-1980s’ aesthetic:

While critics routinely dismissed Rush as pretentious operatic heavy-metal bozos, this indefatigable Canadian trio was actually busy becoming the Police of power rock. [*Power Windows*, 1985 has] balled-up song fists, art-pop blasts of angular, slashing guitar, spatial keyboards and hyper-percussion, all resolved with forthright melodic sense. . . . There are moments when *Power Windows* sounds too much like the sum of its Eighties inspirations—that ghostly U2 resonance, the Police-like mesh of multi-rhythms and ping-pong dub effects. Yet Rush, no doubt responding to familiar impulses, revs up these songs with brute metal force. . . . This is not a case of old Seventies arena-rock dogs fudging new tricks. Rush remains faithful to vintage progressive aesthetics but has accepted the challenge of the post-punk upheaval and made notable adjustments. . . . *Power Windows* may well be the missing link between Yes and the Sex Pistols.<sup>22</sup>

The seemingly preposterous idea of Rush providing a link between progressive rock (Yes) and punk rock (the Sex Pistols) proves rather intriguing. Specifically, in the late 1970s and early 1980s Rush paid a great deal of attention to post-punk music (e.g., new wave rock), and in the early- to mid-1980s the band merged aspects of reggae, ska, and other energy/accessibility features into its ongoing stylistic evolution, as in “The Spirit

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<sup>21</sup> Joe Fernbacher, review of *Power Windows*, in *Creem*, May 1986, 28. Presumably, by “crispless” Fernbacher means something that is not bracing, lively, brisk, and decisive. I based this assumption on the definition of “crisp” found in the *DK Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 198.

<sup>22</sup> David Fricke, review of *Power Windows*, *Rolling Stone*, 30 January 1986, 46.

of Radio” (1980), “Red Barchetta” (1981), “Vital Signs” (1981), “The Analog Kid” (1982), “The Enemy Within” (1984), and “The Big Money” (1985).

Just as Rush came to be highly regarded by musician-fans and related musicians’ magazines in the 1980s and 1990s, most general interest music magazines (especially *Rolling Stone*, despite its numerous Rush-fan readers) felt justified in not addressing the band’s somewhat specialized audience. Even formerly Rush-sympathetic periodicals (such as the U.K.’s *Melody Maker*) disingenuously downplayed the band’s relevance. For example, in 1985 one of *Melody Maker*’s reviewers suggested that “the three of you” would probably enjoy the band’s recent concert video, *Through the Camera Eye*, more than he did,<sup>23</sup> in 1990 another called Rush “complete dorks” (strongly implying that the band’s musician-fans, or at least all non-genius Canadians, also belonged in this category),<sup>24</sup> and in 1996 the magazine similarly suggested that although Rush remained active really only Canadians cared about this.<sup>25</sup> After Rush became eligible for induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1999, *Rolling Stone* senior editor and Hall of Fame adviser David Wild said:

[I]t ain’t ever going to happen. Regardless of their success, Rush has never achieved critical acclaim and no one will ever vote for them . . . most of [Rush’s music] gives me a headache.<sup>26</sup>

By comparison, Wild’s colleague Anthony DeCurtis (a rock critic and contributing editor of *Rolling Stone*), said in the postlude to his May 2002 video interview with

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<sup>23</sup> Barry McIlheney, “Rush Release,” *Melody Maker*, 13 July 1985, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Chris Roberts, review of Rush’s *Chronicles* in *Melody Maker*, 20 October 1990, 40.

<sup>25</sup> [Author unknown,] A.W.O.L.—The column that asks, whatever happened to ..?,” *Melody Maker*, 24 February 1996, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted at [http://inthe00s.com/archive/inthe90s/bbs0/webBBS\\_450.shtml](http://inthe00s.com/archive/inthe90s/bbs0/webBBS_450.shtml).

## Rush's Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson:

I must confess that this interview provided me with the opportunity to come to grips with Rush. I'd always had the standard-issue anti-prog-rock bias characteristic of most rock critics, even though I respected the band for what it had accomplished and especially for the intense loyalty the trio engenders in its fans. . . .<sup>27</sup> In our conversation, Geddy and Alex completely disarmed me. They were smart, modest, honest, friendly and open-minded. We discussed *Vapor Trails*, Rush's new album, in depth, and in a way that made me understand their aspirations as musicians and songwriters. I think that Rush fans will really enjoy this interview; it's always great when your idols live up to your expectations. And people who, like me, had resisted Rush, might find themselves quite positively surprised.<sup>28</sup>

DeCurtis's success in turning such an unlikely corner largely derives from allowing himself to pay attention to actual songs. For several decades, rock critics and album/concert reviewers—from those who accused Rush of proto-fascism to those who didn't terribly mind the band's music—almost never referred to specific songs, let alone saying anything specific *about* such songs.

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<sup>27</sup> On the previous point, DeCurtis points out: "*The A List's* director, Brian DeCubellis . . . brought in a huge Rush-inspired painting he had done in college to show to Geddy and Alex. They were impressed – stunned might be a bit more like it – and I'm not sure Brian will ever recover from the encounter." DeCurtis, "The A List," May 2002. See <http://www.rollingstone.com/videos/playvideo.asp?cid=1555>.

<sup>28</sup> DeCurtis, "The A List," May 2002. DeCurtis holds a Ph.D. in American literature from Indiana University and taught English at Emory University and at Indiana University. See [http://www.rockcritics.com/DeCurtis\\_intro.html](http://www.rockcritics.com/DeCurtis_intro.html).

...and This is Where I Came in

**Figure 1.1: Rush in Concert, ca 1985-86**

(See the Rush WebRing: <http://s.webring.com/hub?sid=&ring=rushring&id=&hub>)



Note Alex Lifeson's and Neil Peart's mid-1980s' new wave (i.e., short) hairstyles, Lifeson's and Geddy Lee's "preppy" jackets, Lifeson's up-to-date Fender Stratocaster guitar, Lee's compact/high-tech Steinberger bass guitar (barely visible from this angle), and Peart's combination of traditional drums and cymbals with Simmons electronic drum pads.

I first heard Rush's music when I was an early teenager, but I never heard the band live until its *Power Windows* tour when I was an undergraduate. Later, I retained only a marginal awareness of the band's continuing activities. I gravitated towards early-1970s' U.K. progressive rock recordings (especially Yes and Genesis), recent recordings by U.K. and North American progressive-influenced singer-songwriters (such as former Genesis lead singer Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush, Canadian Jane Siberry, and Tori Amos), and late-1970s', '80s', and '90s' U.S. "eclectic alternative" pop-rock (such as Talking Heads, R.E.M., and They Might Be Giants). My Honours B.A. in music included traditional musical analysis, electro-acoustic composition, and a "thesis" on tuning systems. My subsequent coursework/exam-based M.A. in musicology

focused mainly on early music (e.g., from the Renaissance) and early-twentieth-century art music. Neither degree touched upon popular music, and a proposed dissertation on music for Shakespearean film adaptations seemed destined to fail within that department.<sup>29</sup>

My 1988-92 rock cover band played “classic rock” songs from the late 1950s through the early 1990s, but we played almost no progressive-oriented hard rock and nothing by Rush.<sup>30</sup> Only a few of my university and choral colleagues displayed more than a slight interest in popular music, and none of us knew much about the interdisciplinary field of popular music studies. Nonetheless, I started mentioning Rush as a possible eventual dissertation topic, and most of my friends and associates (in the band’s hometown) thought I was kidding. I wasn’t kidding, and my own coming to terms with Rush has partly involved allowing myself to appreciate the band’s music again. Simultaneously, I came to grips with how song interpretation and cultural musicology might improve upon certain approaches to popular music studies while also contributing to others. I quickly realized that just like critics and reviewers vis-à-vis Rush, most popular music scholars also rarely mentioned or discussed specific songs. I also quickly realized that I had methodological issues with some of those who did.

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<sup>29</sup> Around the same time, I became a semi-professional choral singer and also worked as a research assistant for an anthropology professor studying Australian aboriginal music. My occasional songwriting came from a vocal/keyboard perspective, so I also experimented with computers and MIDI.

<sup>30</sup> Bil Weber and the Glum Bunch (“Weber” pronounced “Weeber”) performed several dozen songs from the 1950s through the early 1990s, such as: Elvis Presley’s “Jailhouse Rock,” the Rolling Stones’ “Honkey-Tonk Women,” Steppenwolf’s “Born to be Wild,” Van Morrison’s “Moondance,” Derek and the Dominos’ “Layla,” the Doobie Brothers’ “China Grove,” Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “Sweet Home Alabama,” Toto’s “Hold the Line,” The Police’s “Walking on the Moon,” Talking Heads’ “Burning Down the House,” Paul Simon’s “You Can Call Me Al,” INXS’s “New Sensation,” R.E.M.’s “Stand,” the Black Crowes’ version of Otis Redding’s “Hard to Handle,” and several original songs. I played keyboards and sang about three-fifths of the lead vocals (including all of the songs listed above), guitarist Brent Klassen sang many additional songs, Steve Martin played bass (and sang some backing vocals), and Arnie Wohlgemut played drums.

## Progressive-Oriented Rock and Popular Music Studies

Edward Macan reasonably argues that aspects of late-1960s' spiritualism and mysticism provided certain elements of early progressive rock.<sup>31</sup> However, I find it difficult to agree with his claim that progressive rock *as a whole* extended the counterculture's spiritualism and mysticism. In the 1970s, many bands and fans explored socio-political, technological, and/or science-fiction themes. This relates partly to U.K. socio-economic class-consciousness and partly to "middle-brow" influences from literature and elsewhere. Biblical imagery occasionally appears in U.K. progressive rock, such as in certain works by early Genesis (most obviously in that band's name and in the title of its first album: *From Genesis to Revelation*). However, this relates, at *most*, to Anglican cultural traditions, such as preparatory schools, church music, and pipe organs. Even the psychedelic progressive band Pink Floyd mainly explored socio-political issues (e.g., mental states, industry hegemony, class structure, and war) from 1973 to the early 1980s. On *Animals* (1977), the band uses a semi-psychedelic variant of Psalm 23 (e.g., "With bright knives He releaseth my soul") to contribute to its non-spiritual/non-mystical point about class conflict.

For some, the performative excesses of certain musicians marked progressive rock as obsessed with classical music to the virtual exclusion of all else. In reality, progressive rock relies on improvisational skills from a wide variety of popular forms. Its eclectic aesthetic challenged rock music's traditional emphasis on the blues-based

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<sup>31</sup> See Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6, 12-13, 16. Progressive rock's lyrics often embody a self-conscious "seriousness," including adventure-fantasy and science-fiction narratives. Its live shows often featured considerable visual spectacle, such as lasers, films, and flashpots. Its album art tends towards elaborate designs, including fantasy scenes and alien landscapes. Roger Dean and Paul Whitehead both created a number of influential progressive rock album covers, especially for Yes and Genesis, respectively. However, none of this warrants an overriding connection to the counterculture.

electric guitar. Thus, comparatively technical electric guitarists, such as King Crimson's Robert Fripp and Yes's Steve Howe, expanded the guitar's stylistic possibilities. The continuing electric guitar style of the 1960s (i.e., emotive and bluesy) converged with a comparatively eccentric, compositionally intricate ("busy") style. Fripp and others found their inspiration not only in classical music, but also in 20<sup>th</sup>-century experimental music, jazz, and many other forms. As for keyboards, progressive rock similarly features virtuosic playing instead of the more integrated, timbre- and texture-oriented contributions of late-1960s, especially U.S., rock. Performers shifted from mainly using amplified electronic organs to mainly using pianos, Mellotrons (early analogue "performance samplers"), and synthesizers. Some keyboardists occasionally used actual pipe organs. Progressive rock often heterogeneously distributes its soloists, giving each player one or more featured moments. Music by some progressive rock bands, such as Yes and Emerson Lake & Palmer, often features virtuosic/soloistic instrumental sections.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, King Crimson and Genesis often explored textures of virtuosic ensemble playing.

In 1969 sales of rock albums surpassed sales of pop singles, and most of the initial U.K. progressive rock bands released debut albums in 1969 or 1970. Within two or three years, this early post-countercultural music featured among the top-selling album-oriented rock (AOR) in North America and the U.K. Bill Bruford, drummer for Yes, King Crimson, and other progressive rock groups said:

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<sup>32</sup> These bands involved the notoriously flashy, rock keyboard heroes Keith Emerson and (in Yes) Rick Wakeman, both of whom studied and performed classical music before pursuing rock. Not surprisingly, their aesthetic derived from pianist-composer Franz Liszt (1811-86).

Psychedelia? I couldn't have given a monkey's [sic] about it. I'm sure I went to Kensington Market and bought my purple flared trousers but all I was interested in was being [jazz drummer] Elvin Jones, like Mitch Mitchell was [in the Jimi Hendrix Experience]. I wanted to be Elvin Jones with Yes.<sup>33</sup>

Also invoking jazz, the main performer in the U.K. rock band Jethro Tull, Ian Anderson, clearly modelled his style on that of the U.S. progressive jazz wind performer Rahsaan Roland Kirk.<sup>34</sup> However, many of progressive rock's references to jazz and art music went largely undetected, or at least underappreciated, by fans. When I first encountered progressive rock, I only knew the names Mussorgsky, Copland, and Ginastera because Emerson Lake & Palmer had done something with their music. Bright Collars associated this music with their growing, post-countercultural inclinations towards mathematics, science, and structure, and many ended up working in fields such as computers and architecture. For them, progressive rock and related rock music largely substituted *for* art music.<sup>35</sup>

Music theorists who study popular music tend not to incorporate historical or interpretive arguments directly into their analyses. John Covach, Walter Everett, and Lori Burns usually begin their articles with brief examples of the former as prologues to long examples of the latter. Thus, Covach finds progressive rock to “engag[e] . . . art music practices . . . [and] grappl[e] . . . with the problems of form, harmonic and melodic language, contrapuntal textures, instrumentation, and virtuosity.”<sup>36</sup> These

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Stump, interview with Bruford, quoted in Stump, *The Music's All That Matters*, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Thanks to Daniel Goldmark for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>35</sup> Progressive-influenced songs by Led Zeppelin, Queen, and others also function(ed) this way, and it also relates to the late-1990s/early-2000s subculture of classical versions of rock songs.

<sup>36</sup> John Covach, “Progressive Rock, ‘Close to the Edge,’ and the Boundaries of Style” in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, ed. John Covach and Graeme M. Boone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.



writers then “prove” these statements in the extended analyses that follow.<sup>37</sup> Covach argues that “borrowings [from] baroque-era counterpoint, romantic-era virtuosity, and modernist rhythmic syncopations and sectional juxtaposition [are] of the same kind: ‘classical.’”<sup>38</sup> However, progressive rock’s interest in art music’s expanded forms extends no further than heavy metal’s interest in Baroque music’s gestural language.

Covach states that there is “nothing problematic about employing standard analytical techniques” to Yes’s LP-side length work “Close to the Edge” (an exemplary progressive rock work, 1972).<sup>39</sup> However, he makes arguable assumptions about the work’s metrical construction and overlooks the fact that the music ebbs and flows between instrumental and sung passages. He also neglects the fact the work includes important stylistic features having nothing to do with art music.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the work includes rhythm-and-blues elements, guitarist Steve Howe’s country-style picked passages, jam sections that sound like hoe-downs, psychedelic passages somewhat reminiscent of 1965-68 Beatles, folk rock (frequent vocal harmonies in thirds and several gentle “child-like” passages), and jazz, including Bill Bruford’s drumming and

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<sup>37</sup> This strategy led to an emphasis on early-1970s progressive rock and on younger, underground (i.e., relatively obscure or “cult”) progressive rock bands that emerged later and consciously modelled themselves after the earlier bands.

<sup>38</sup> Covach, “Progressive Rock,” 7. This also provides a fairly direct method for limiting what qualifies as progressive rock.

<sup>39</sup> John Covach, “Progressive Rock,” *Understanding Rock*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Yes’s guitarist Steve Howe incorporates pedal-steel effects from country music. By ignoring such elements, Covach also slides more easily into his point about a possible connection between the philosophical lyrics of “Close to the Edge” and the “arty” novel that *may* have inspired it: Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* (1922). Covach’s later work suggests that he wished to broaden the definition of progressive rock to include elements of jazz-rock fusion. See John Covach, “Jazz-Rock? Rock-Jazz? Stylistic Crossover in Late-1970s American Progressive Rock” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Walter Everett (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 113-34.

Rick Wakeman's "dirty" Hammond B3 electric organ. Some of the guitar/synthesizer passages sound, for all the world, like scat-singing. Why does lead singer Jon Anderson sing in a pure ("elfin") head tone when, technically, he could often sing in his natural, high tenor chest voice? Why do Chris Squire and Steve Howe sometimes contribute vocals to a particular section of the work *before* Anderson? When and why does Anderson sometimes accompany *himself* in harmony, instead of making use of Squire and Howe? Emphasizing a few of the work's "classical" elements and ignoring many other things (including additional "classical" elements) is *highly* misleading.

Covach insists that progressive rock as a "stylistic category," necessarily "depends on characteristics to be found in the musical texts themselves."<sup>41</sup> In such a worldview, supposedly autonomous musical "characteristics" comprise music's fundamental building blocks. Thus, progressive rock "progresses" in that it remains "independent of variants of musical practice, social usage and reception."<sup>42</sup> Theodor Adorno at least *believed* that social critique takes place in what he considered to be history's most important musical works and composers (e.g., Beethoven and Schoenberg). By comparison, music theorists writing about progressive rock have posited an artificial "hypostasis of technique" in which "true" progressive rock must *only* concern the appropriation of classical music and certainly cannot relate to social contexts or even to other music. They fail to see that some music—e.g., much of Rush's music—has just as much in common with progressive rock as acknowledged works of U.K. progressive rock have in common with each another.<sup>43</sup> As Richard

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<sup>41</sup> Covach, "Progressive Rock," *Understanding Rock*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 40. This recalls what Theodor Adorno believed about Beethoven's "socially autonomous" music (as paraphrased by Richard Middleton).

<sup>43</sup> See Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 44.

Middleton puts it: “The methodological focus on *texts* means that sometimes important distinctions of category or meaning are missed or simplified” and that this results in a “lack of concern with *practice*—how all these texts worked as culture.”<sup>44</sup> Music theorists writing about progressive rock perfectly exemplify this lack.<sup>45</sup>

Lori Burns, in the introduction to her analysis of Tori Amos’s “Crucify” implies that Robert Walser’s analysis of Bon Jovi’s “Livin’ on a Prayer” fails to go far enough in terms of music theory. She criticizes him for not “explor[ing] the potential of the progression C-D-E (on its own terms) to create a sense of tension of directionality.”<sup>46</sup> In fact, Walser explores the progression throughout the passage Burns quotes. He refers, among other things, to its “seeming naturalness and inevitability,” its “negativity and oppression,” and its function as a “gloomy treadmill.”<sup>47</sup> Walser’s point is that whether or not C-D-E can also provide tension and directionality in other contexts, in

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<sup>44</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 100.

<sup>45</sup> Many music theorists write about the progressive rock band Yes. However, most of them ignore the fact that numerous of the band’s members—not only lead singer Jon Anderson—came from relatively modest backgrounds. Anderson came from a Roman Catholic family in a working-class mill town, and the young Anderson listened to pop radio while working as a farm hand and, later, as a truck driver. Bassist Chris Squire’s father was a cab driver, and the young Squire mainly enjoyed English church music. Drummer Bill Bruford’s father was a veterinarian, and the young Bruford preferred jazz. Guitarist Steve Howe’s father was a chef, and the young Howe often listened to country music. See Bill Martin, *Music of Yes: Structure and Vision in Progressive Rock Music* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 45-53. He derives the biographical facts of his discussion largely from Dan Hedges, *Yes: The Authorized Biography* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981), 11-43.

<sup>46</sup> See Lori Burns, Chapter 8, “Analytical Methodologies for Rock Music: Harmonic and Voice-Leading Strategies in Tori Amos’s ‘Crucify,’” in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Walter Everett (New York: Garland, 2000), 214-16.

Burns demonstrates the view of many music theorists that an artist’s background has nothing to do with his or her music. She separates Tori Amos as a *person*—and even as a singer, songwriter, and pianist—from her *music*. Amos’s music involves a lyrical semi-mysticism, an ongoing position against organized religion, a paradoxically obscure confessional approach, prominent use of an elaborate piano-based style, and overt influences from 1970s’ hard rock.

<sup>47</sup> See Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 121-22.

the Bon Jovi song the pattern provides meaning not on its *own* terms but through its context in relation to an eventual apotheosis. With regard to the latter, he points to the rarity of such a minor/major duality in rock as an important factor for the song's power. Revealingly, Burns stops quoting him six or seven lines before this. Walser's methodologically varied three-page discussion of Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer"—a song which I do not especially like—gives better reasons for me to care about it than Burns' article gives me to care about Tori Amos's "Crucify"—which I *already* know and like.

Historians, analysts, and critics of U.K. progressive rock seem to agree that successful, mainstream examples of the genre last appeared in the mid- to late 1970s. Many cite Yes's *Going for the One* (1977) as the last important album by one of the original U.K. progressive rock bands that emerged around 1968-70. In order to limit progressive rock historically to the early 1970s, such writers generally exclude post-1977 albums by Yes and others. In fact, the 1977 red herring allowed many writers to ignore the widespread influence of this music on fans and musicians (e.g., Rush) that came into their own *after* the mid-1970s. Simon Frith discusses "sense of exclusivity" as a primary function in the *initial* flourishing of a genre.<sup>48</sup> Franco Fabbri suggests that a musical genre "*connotes* diverse things" even if it can "*denote* the same thing for different people."<sup>49</sup> Kansas, Supertramp, Rush, Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel (formerly of Genesis), and Tori Amos used eclectic literary, textural, and rhythmic elements in the late 1970s, 1980s, and later. For many listeners who started to collect music after 1977,

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<sup>48</sup> Frith, Chapter 4, "Genre Rules," in *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 88.

<sup>49</sup> Fabbri, "What kind of music?" in *Popular Music*, Vol. 2 "Theory and Method," ed. Richard Middleton and David Horn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 132.

new music by these artists connoted progressive rock even though early-1970s music by Yes, Genesis, ELP, and others denoted it. (By comparison, *new* music by Yes and Genesis in the early to mid-1980s only slightly and occasionally connoted it.)

Raymond Williams' cultural theory differentiates the "specific sociology of a given society at a certain time and place" from "general cultural property."<sup>50</sup> The broadening subject matter and methodologies under the rubric "progressive rock" replace the former with the latter. Middleton calls this the "remapping of a terrain," and although he desires a more "useful musicology" on the whole, approaches to rock music provide a fruitful starting point.<sup>51</sup> Like any cultural form, rock comprises a "system of shared meanings."<sup>52</sup> Robert Walser discusses the specific types of classical music appropriations found in the music of heavy metal guitarists Ritchie Blackmore, Edward Van Halen, Randy Rhoads, and Yngwie Malmsteen, including Bach's counterpoint, Vivaldi's tonal sequences, and Paganini's virtuosity.<sup>53</sup> He contrasts these with progressive rock keyboardist Keith Emerson's elitist appropriations of classical music.<sup>54</sup> However, Emerson Lake & Palmer's "Lucky Man" (1970), as but one example of the

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<sup>50</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana, 1981), 150-51; quoted in Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 122.

<sup>51</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5. Quoted in Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 167.

<sup>53</sup> See Walser, *Running with the Devil*, especially 61-95.

<sup>54</sup> ELP sometimes made multi-keyboard (generally including drums, guitar, and/or bass) arrangements of large-scale 19th and 20th century programmatic orchestral; Ian Anderson and Jethro Tull sometimes gravitated towards Bach or English Renaissance (instrumental) styles; Gentle Giant and the French band Magma sometimes included complex vocal polyphony (unlike any classical music I have ever sung), and Yes and Genesis sometimes included surface "classical" instrumentations (e.g., classical guitars and string-like keyboard sounds), large-scale forms reminiscent of late-18th and early-19th century symphonies, or complex polyphony something akin to that of 20th century string quartets.

band's broader style, functions mainly as a kind a ballad and combines gentle guitar- and voice-based elements with a sensible synthesizer solo. In a related matter, John J. Sheinbaum points to Edward Macan's consistent use of classical music terminology in his discussion of "Firth of Fifth" by Genesis (1973), even though the song also references pop music and ragtime.<sup>55</sup>

### **Synthesizing Rush's Adaptive/Evolutionary "Musicians' Rock"**

By foregrounding a popular music artist's individual songs to such an extent, I can use that music as a "context for human perception and action."<sup>56</sup> Rush's music functions as more than "icing on an infra-structural cake"<sup>57</sup> or a reflection of stylistic "taste." The band's music articulates a specific form of a post-countercultural ideology and aesthetic, one that helped shape the professional and entrepreneurial worldviews of hundreds of thousands of technique-oriented musician-fans and others from the post-industrial working and lower-middle classes. As Christopher Waterman summarizes: "Marxian analyses have often treated performance arts as superstructural epiphenomena, or assumed that mass cultural forms not explicitly involved in class struggle are counterrevolutionary and thus unworthy of explication."<sup>58</sup> Certainly, Marxian rock critics found themselves at odds—in precisely these ways—with Rush's

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<sup>55</sup> John J. Sheinbaum, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values," Chapter 1 of *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 28. See also Macan, *Rocking the Classics*, 106-112.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher Alan Waterman, *Jùjú: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 214.

<sup>57</sup> Waterman, *Jùjú*, 6. Waterman is critiquing common Marxian attitudes towards cultural texts.

<sup>58</sup> Waterman, *Jùjú*, 4.

peculiarly adaptive and evolutionary musical style. To expand on some definitions and distinctions outlined by Keir Keightley, I would suggest that Rush largely centred its music around Modernist tendencies (e.g., development, change, artistic integrity, the use of technology, and “recorded-ness”), but often without Modernism’s radical experimentation or its overtly contestatory political dimensions and shock effects. However, the band’s aesthetic also sometimes involved Romanticist streaks of valuing the pre-industrial past, the non-use of technology, nature, and/or various types of work, but without Romanticism’s equally central interest in “sincere, unmediated expression of inner experience” or “live-ness.”<sup>59</sup>

Of the thirty-four Rush songs interpreted in this study, only a few made use of guest performers (i.e., occasional keyboardists, backing vocalists, and/or an orchestral section).<sup>60</sup> This exemplifies Rush’s predominant “trio individualist” interest in creating pre-composed music that remained suitable for the three of them to play live, and it also explains the band’s frequent use of sound effects, pedal-board synthesizers, and sampling. Despite its duration, “Cygnus X-1” (1977) has a small amount of vocals (16% of 10:21 or 1:39), which reflects the band’s early preference for extended instrumental sections and also relates to its five subsequent all-instrumental song offerings. Otherwise, Rush increasingly became interested in basing its songs around strong vocals melodies and comparatively accessible, “post-progressive”—though sometimes “progressive-influenced”—song structures. Excluding the 1978 and 1981 instrumentals, Geddy Lee’s participation on lead vocals increased from just under 37%

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<sup>59</sup> Keir Keightley, “Reconsidering Rock,” Chapter 5 of *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 136-7. See also pp. 135-9.

<sup>60</sup> See also “Appendix K: Album Track Listings and Cumulative Song Charts.”

per song (1974-82) to just over 44% (1984-85) to more than 63% (1987-2002). Vocal harmonies also increased by a similar percentage, from occasional traces (1974-81) to occasional participation (1982-84) to 10.5% (1985-89) to more than 22% (1991-2002). Guest vocalists (i.e., Aimee Mann, Rupert Hine, or the band's guitarist Alex Lifeson) sometimes participated from 1987 to 1991, but Lee then increasingly performed his own backing vocals from 1993 to 2002. Also, Lee's average (mean) lead vocal median pitch decreased and his range became less extreme as his countertenor style matured—from an average of E2 (a third above middle C) and a range from F0 (at the bottom of the bass clef) to A3 (above the treble clef) from 1974 to 1981 to an average of C2 (middle C) and a range of A0 to D3 from 1982 to 2002.<sup>61</sup>

*Presto* and *Roll the Bones* (1989-91) feature at least some background vocals by the band's then co-producer Rupert Hine, with Hine's gruff voice occasionally provides a timbral contrast to Lee's comparatively brittle voice. A similar contrasting voice also vocalizes on "Totem" (*Test for Echo*, 1996). These recall the background vocals of Steve Howe and Chris Squire (vis-à-vis Jon Anderson) in the U.K. progressive rock band Yes. In "Hand over Fist" (*Presto*, 1989), a high synthesizer (wordless) doubling of Lee's voice reinforces the lyrics that briefly represent a woman who "hated that song for so long." Similar wordless parts appear on the band's otherwise instrumental "Limbo" (*Test for Echo*, 1996). Lee's wordless vocal parts also frequently appear on *Vapor Trails* (2002). In the mid- to late 1990s, Lee spoke highly of recordings by multi-faceted Icelandic singer-songwriter Björk, so his interest in exploring his own multi-faceted voice (including his solo album, *My Favourite Headache*, 2000) may

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<sup>61</sup> Probably to compensate both for its increased emphasis on writing vocal melodies and for the increase in album lengths (by about 50%, due to the CD format) by the late 1980s, Rush contributed one song-length instrumental work on each of its 1991, 1993, and 1996 studio albums.



have at least partly stemmed from that influence. Alex Lifeson contributed some studio background vocals to *Roll the Bones*, 1991. However, until the band's 2002 tour he did not supply any significant live vocals.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, even on Rush's 2002 concert tour the band mixed in most background vocals (by Lee, Hine, or someone else) and most keyboard sounds from offstage equipment.

In its most technological era, 1982-87, Rush increased its use of synthesizers (including bass pedals), other keyboards, and guest keyboardists in the songs explored in this study to 69%. This more than doubled the amount of keyboards from 1976-81 (34%), during the early part of which (1976-78) the band also made substantial use of sound effects, nature sounds, and effects-treated voices (13%). Although synthesizers and keyboards still participated at about 43% from 1989 to 1996, the band used them much more subtly in that period, often in favour of increasingly elaborate guitar/bass/drums "power trio" textures. The band then removed all keyboards for its 2002 studio album. Peart phased out his overt (1984-85) use of Simmons electronic drums much more quickly, and in 1987 he favoured subtle applications of triggered samples, often based on real drums (including non-western instruments) and other non-electronic sound sources. On the other hand, Peart—and Rush as a whole—rarely used electronic percussion or sampled material in new music on the band's three studio albums from 1989 to 1993 and probably not at all on its studio albums from 1996 and 2002. By the late 1980s, the band had clearly experienced considerable anxiety over the benefits of music technology vs. "real" musicianship.

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<sup>62</sup> On his 1996 album *Victor*, Lifeson provides occasional spoken vocals but no "singing," as guest male and female rock singers contribute lead vocals to a number of songs. I suspect that Lifeson may have taken voice lessons, or similar coaching, between the fall of 1997 and the summer of 2002.

Concerning Rush's traditional melodic/rhythmic unisons, the band averaged about 20% per song from 1974 to 1981 (i.e., in instrumental sections, although these sometimes continued into sung sections), then only about 5% from 1982 to 2002. However, in its later music the band often wrote rhythmically complex grooves to underlie its verses and/or choruses, thus belying any particular reduction in complexity vis-à-vis its earlier music. On the whole, the members of Rush and its musician-fans did not find the band's later music easier to play than its earlier music, and Rush's music remained "musicianly" (a.k.a. "progressive," in that particular meaning). However, the music also became more compact and succinct, which is also reflected in the band's consistently shorter songs (averaging 8:08 from 1974-81 but averaging only 5:06 from 1982-2002 in the thirty-four songs studied here). Lifeson's guitar solos became similarly more succinct, making up 13% of the songs from 1974 to 1981 but only 7% from 1982 to 2002 in the songs explored here. In an even more significant "post-progressive sea-change," from 1974 to 1984 asymmetrical ("odd") metres comprise 16% of the songs explored in this study (25% in 1977-78, with both of those albums recorded in the U.K.), but from 1985 to 2002 they comprise only 3%.

Rush's music matters because it demonstrates that the influence of progressive rock's structural and metrical complexities extended beyond a finite period in the early to mid-1970s. It shows that individualist musicians can pursue a successful path that continually flies in the face of industry contexts, fan expectations, and even the expectations of the band members themselves. The band preferred to "make its own mistakes," and, along these lines, in 1990 Neil Peart said: "I don't think everything we've done is great."<sup>63</sup> Rush's music exemplifies the possibility of change and

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<sup>63</sup> Nick Krewen, "Rush: Presto change-o," *Canadian Musician* 12.2 (April 1990), 37.

diversity within a larger game plan; problematizes ideology, genre, style, technology, and community; and reveals the inclination of a “dorky” Canadian (“Anglo-American”) band to combine tendencies from U.K. rock (i.e., progressive rock, blues-rock, and heavy metal) with aspects of U.S. rock (i.e., hard rock, arena rock, jazz-rock, and eclectic pop-rock). Rush’s music mattered to the band’s 660, 000 or so hardcore musician-fans (who comprise a variety of “musicianly” types, from occasional to amateur to professional) but also to about 340, 000 hardcore non-musician-fans and two million casual fans, who probably included numerous friends and relatives of the hardcore fans.

Most of Rush’s fans, hardcore *or* casual, comprised various types of postindustrial/“non-yuppie” working-class persons (e.g., customer service representatives, courier-drivers, and electronics technicians) and lower-middle-class entrepreneurial professionals (e.g., consultants, engineers, and computer programmers). Tens of millions of New Collars and Bright Collars did not find meaningful cultural resonances in Rush’s music, but most of the several million who did belonged to these categories. Of Rush’s three million casual and hardcore fans, about 2.34 million comprised males, including a wide variety of post-industrial and/or technical employment situations. The roughly 660, 000 casual and hardcore female Rush fans included several musicologists and popular music scholars I met at conferences in the U.S. and Canada, a colleague’s school-teacher cousin, professional alternative rock bassist Kim Deal (of the Pixies and, later, of the Breeders), and professional classical violinist Rachel Barton.<sup>64</sup> The approximately 285, 000 casual and hardcore non-white

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<sup>64</sup> The 1980s and 1990s saw an increased balancing of gender roles vis-à-vis traditional employment in post-industrial areas, shown, for example, by the much greater numbers both of male elementary school teachers and of women with degrees in science and technology. In the same period, non-whites increasingly completed college and university programs and entered careers and professions.

Rush fans included a pair of male African-American college administrators, a female North American indigenous person lead singer of a Rush tribute band, and probably most of the persons who heard the band play at its four concerts in Japan in 1984 and its concert in Mexico City and three concerts in Brazil in 2002.<sup>65</sup> Tens of millions of additional New Collars and Bright Collars, including women and non-whites, identified with other eclectic, progressive-influenced, and/or hard rock “musicianly” female and non-white artists, such as Joni Mitchell, Santana, Kate Bush, Prince, Los Lobos, Living Colour, and Tori Amos.

### **Cultural Musicology and the Progressive Post-Counterculture**

Chapter 2, “Endlessly Rocking: Post-1960s’ Rock Music and Socio-Musical Cultural Contexts,” establishes the context for a particular band’s music in a technique-oriented ideology and aesthetic that conflicted with other value systems. It also examines an early-1970s’ song by that band in order to introduce the study’s discussion of stylistic features and selected excerpts of musical notation and/or lyrics within song interpretations. Sara Cohen suggests:

Further ethnographies of scenes could help to illustrate the way in which scenes are lived, experienced, and imagined by particular groups within particular situations, and to explore their local, national, and transnational connections. Such ethnographies would not study scenes simply as local culture in particular places, but attend to the ways in which scenes both produce the local and move across and connect disparate places.<sup>66</sup>

As I show in this study, certain *music* can also be a “scene” and, in a sense, provide its

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<sup>65</sup> These samplings certainly reflect no rigorous statistical methodology on my part, but the gender/ethnicity percentages remained quite similar among my “hardcore”-fan respondents from 1996 in southern California and from 2000-01 in southern Ontario (see Appendix E).

<sup>66</sup> Sara Cohen, “Scene,” Chapter 18 in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 249.

own ethnographic material. My survey responses from several locations in California and Ontario suggest that music can “move across and connect disparate places” *without* “producing the local” because the “particular situations” of a certain band’s fans remain largely comparable despite being dispersed by geography, ethnicity, gender, and age. Nearly all of the band’s fans came from the post-industrial, post-countercultural working and lower-middle classes. More specifically, two-thirds of the band’s hardcore fans—even the third who were not white, male, and/or in their thirties or forties—formed a social class of post-industrial employed people, many of whom also participated culturally as musicians themselves. The power relation of this dispersed fan/musician-fan community derives both from preferring the adaptive, evolutionary disposition of “musicianly” music and from participating *in* music. Both of these factors relate to the technique-oriented and entrepreneurial (e.g., semi-professional, upwardly mobile, and/or middle-brow) employment/class situations of many of these fans. This suggests that the shift in value from work to non-work in the 1950s and ‘60s (e.g., teenagers and hippies) reversed itself for some people in the 1970s and ‘80s (e.g., an updated work ethic). This conflicted with the value system—and with the interpretive hegemony—of Marxian rock critics, who preferred reactive and revolutionary music. Within that context, the song interpretations include discussions of instruments, sound mixes, literature, biography, riff designs, vocal placements, tempo contrasts, rhythmic structures, harmonic shifts, tonalities, modalities, excerpts of musical notation, lyrics’ excerpts, band quotes, critics’ quotes, scholarly quotes, and/or additional aspects that best serve to elucidate a particular song’s value according to such issues as institutions, reception, genre, literature, and technology.

Other aspects of Chapter 2 contextualise falsetto and countertenor male rock singing styles (including aspects of interpretive work by Susan McClary, Robert Walser, Susan Fast, and Peter Giles), discuss the origin of “progressive” rock and other styles in the late-1960s, offer a method for calculating approximate populations of an artist’s hardcore vs. casual fans, consider popular music scholarship on scenes and audience alliances (including aspects of work by Will Straw and Keith Negus), engage with the history and ideology of rock critics and rock journals vs. musicians’ magazines and musician-fans, explore research on the sociological and ideological contexts for post-industrial working- and lower-middle-class career activities (including aspects of work by Ralph Whitehead), discuss the appeal of individualism and libertarianism for such persons, and consider ethnographic research on working-class young people in the 1970s (i.e., by Victoria Anne Steinitz and Ellen Rachel Solomon). In order to introduce the basic facts of the band’s history before detailed discussions of some of its 1975-2002 music, Chapter 2 concludes with an historical overview of the band and its music (1968-2003).

Chapter 3, “Keep on Looking Forward: Individualism and the Progressive/Hard/Metallic Alloy,” investigates certain late-1970s’ songs—including extended individualist works—that lays the groundwork for the band’s progressive/hard style and for its eccentric career. Among other things, this involved using varied styles, alternating textures, specific melodic and rhythmic gestures, and contrasting tonal areas within individual songs. The band’s new drummer took some of its lyrics into a more literary (arguably “middle-brow” and/or “semi-literary”) direction, and some songs and extended works explored individualism, historical perspectives, and/or literary tropes—related, for example, to an anti-collectivist novella by Ayn Rand, certain ironies of the

French Revolution and democracy, an epic/Romantic poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, scientific fascination about the astronomical phenomenon of black holes, the idea of balancing Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies, establishing a nature-derived metaphor in favour of libertarianism, and partially basing a lengthy instrumental work on the content of the guitarist's dreams.

The large-scale musical/formal design, progressive/hard rock stylistic fusion, and asymmetrical metrical constructions of these works inspired and encouraged—and, arguably, enabled—certain types of rock fans to pursue their own, individualistic paths within the post-counterculture. Like the band in this type of music, some people (whether musicians or not) similarly began to explore technique, professionalism, technology, and entrepreneurialism in this period. Also like the band, such people made ideological pigeonholing vis-à-vis conservatism vs. liberalism an extremely precarious undertaking for rock critics and others. I compare the stylistic features of the songs, and I also provide somewhat detailed “chronological overview” charts—as well as references to mythology, novels, non-fiction books, films, television shows, Emile Durkheim's notion of “fatalistic,” “anomic,” and “egotistical” suicide, Richard Middleton's idea of fadeout “positional implications,” Susan McClary's concept of “illusory hope,” and David Brackett's discussion of undercoding vs. overcoding—to help contextualise the prose discussions of certain sections and features within the more extended works. Subtle Canadian contexts also became relevant to some of the later works discussed in that chapter.

Chapter 4, “All This Machinery: Music Technology and Stylistic Ambivalence,” covers much of the 1980s, the period when the band incorporated music technology and a wide range of secondary stylistic alternative within consistently

concise songs. From 1980 to 1987, the band streamlined elements from its continuing “progressive power trio” aesthetic (e.g., virtuosic unisons, short/vivid guitar solos, succinct use of “odd metres,” and subtle synthesizers) into the larger mainstream while also bringing elements of the larger mainstream (e.g., “modern rock”) into its music. The chapter covers the band’s anxiety over stylistic and technological issues, but it also emphasises the band’s musical (not just lyrical) “working through” of these issues, which it opted to do instead of ignoring or bypassing them. For example, I explore the band’s combination of 1970s’ hard rock modal constructions with 1980s’ post-punk and new wave tendencies towards major/minor diatonicism. Also, I investigate how the band’s bassist-singer started writing parts of songs on keyboard instruments in 1979-80 and how he wrote some complete song arrangements on keyboards by 1981-82.

Some of the band’s songs from this period continued its interest in individualism (though presented somewhat more moderately), but its lyrics, musical style, and music-making evoked a wide variety of issues from 1980 to 1987, including album rock radio, post-punk and post-progressive types of rock music (including samples of African and Asian percussion instruments), the music industry, free will, war (including Cold War-derived imagery), the varying roles of occasional guest musicians and of co-producers (especially Terry Brown and Peter Collins), references to Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway, residual interests somewhat paralleling Ayn Rand’s, a subtle encoding of “home” in an texturally-varied instrumental work, fame, technology (relating to work by Paul Théberge), science/gender (e.g., applying ideas from Judy Wajcman), and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus* (structured and structuring dispositions). Also, the band’s album covers and music videos became quite evocative in this period, so I discuss these elements to a somewhat greater extent than I



do in my discussions of earlier and later music in Chapters 3 and 5.

Chapter 5, “Due Reflection: Human Nature and Other Horizons,” explores songs from 1989 to 2002, during which time the band tapered off its interest in music technology and increasingly engaged in updated variants of its earlier “power trio” aesthetic. This also involves a consideration of the band’s pre-production compositional process (“Boys’ Camp”), which continued to use music technology for songwriting and arranging purposes, but less and less for sounds. Other topics included the band members’ peak period of recognition in musicians’ magazines, its increased interest in writing songs based around strong vocal melodies (and, increasingly, elaborate vocal harmonies), an increased use of “heavy” acoustic guitars, and song-based approaches to issues of human nature (e.g., teen suicide, relationships, chance, and random contingencies), the physical world (i.e., nature and the environment), additional occasional or temporary style fragments (e.g., funk and rap), role models vs. empty heroes, reviving the idea of rock instrumentals, the collapse of Soviet communism, the media (e.g., reality/crime TV), the myth of Sisyphus, and lyrical connections to Dylan Thomas, Carl Jung, T. S. Eliot, Camille Paglia, and science-fiction writer Kevin J. Anderson.

I hope that this study will encourage popular music scholars to pursue detailed song interpretations in order to contribute to wider discourses about society, culture, and music. Academic work on popular music and culture often includes almost nothing about specific songs—conversely, academic work on specific songs often includes almost nothing about culture. If we wish to address issues of how and why specific music creates meaning for certain groups within society, then we should discuss contexts and texts simultaneously.

## **Chapter 2—Endlessly Rocking: Post-1960s’ Rock Music and Socio-Musical Cultural Contexts**

[I] want to write about ideals. I’m not interested in writing about the sewer of life.<sup>1</sup>

-Rush’s drummer-lyricist Neil Peart, 1982

In the set-lists of the majority of its concert tours, Rush included one of its earliest songs, “Working Man.” Neil Peart had not yet joined Rush at the time of the song’s composition or recording, but it nonetheless provides a good sense of the band’s—including Peart’s—origins in working- and lower-middle class contexts in the late-1960s and early-1970s. Lyrically, the song recounts the travails of a working-class male: getting up at seven, putting in a full day’s work, enjoying a beer before dinner, but somehow never quite accepting that this is where he should be. He complains of having “no time for living” and always wonders “why there’s nothing going down here.” At the same time, he dreams that he might some day be able to live his life a lot better than he is now. The song’s music provides a good sense not only of the band’s early Cream- and Led Zeppelin-influenced blues-rock style (i.e., a guitar/bass/drums “power trio,” with extensive guitar solo material) but also of the band’s emphasis on non-solo instrumental passages and of Geddy Lee’s unusual combination of vocal techniques—which can span about three octaves, through baritone, tenor, alto, and soprano ranges.

Appendix K includes individual song style-charts in order to synthesise each song’s basic features concerning elements such as vocals, instrumentation, texture, and metrical constructions. Such features include:

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Makowski, “Adrenalin Rush,” *Sounds*, 18 Dec. 1982.

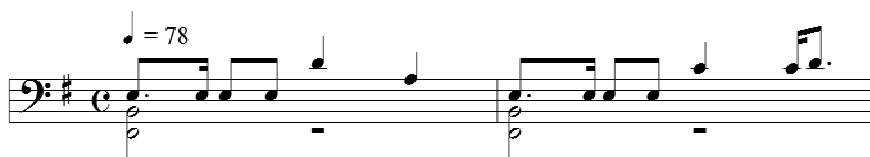
- the relative presence, range, and average pitch of lead vocals;  
the degree of backing vocals and any participation by a guest vocalist
- the relative presence of bass, keyboards (including foot-controlled synthesizers and guest keyboardists), guitar, percussion/drums (including electronic percussion), and speech/samples (including sound effects and delay effects)
- the portion given to instrumental music—solos (i.e., melodically and/or rhythmically featuring one main instrument) as well as unison and contrapuntal percentages
- the portion in “odd metres” (excluding dropped beats and indeterminate metres)

“Working Man” exemplifies certain aspects of Rush’s early style: a high proportion of instrumental and guitar solo passages; an avoidance of keyboards, electronics, and guests; and Lee’s high vocals (E1 to D3, with C2 representing middle C), its lack of backing vocals, and its pre-progressive aesthetic (i.e., no “odd metres”). Within my detailed song interpretations, I often provide formal outlines (especially in Chapter 3) in addition to selected excerpts of musical notation and/or lyrics.

“Working Man” mainly inscribes a relatively slow walking tempo, almost “plodding” as compared with much of the band’s other music. The song emphasizes a two-bar, power chord, electric guitar riff (similar to Black Sabbath) and thus arguably fits into the category “heavy metal.” The riff outlines natural minor (i.e., the aeolian mode) and leaps optimistically upwards from the song’s main pitch (the “tonic,” E) to not quite an octave higher (D), then falls emphatically through the pitch halfway between (A) on its way back down to its emphatic starting note (see Example 2.1).

**Example 2.1: Main Riff of “Working Man,”  
twice through at 0:00-0:12 and continuing**

**NOTE: MP3 audio files of all notated examples in this study appear as links at:  
<http://durrellbowman.com/dissexamples.html>**



The second measure of the riff at first parallels the first. However, halfway through it leaps to a different note (C) and then rises by step on a comparatively active short/long “snap” rhythm to the octave-thwarting D. The cycle then begins again, thus inscribing a basic alternation between something slightly negative (falling back) and something slightly positive (trying to rise up). The main pitch, E, signifies being stuck somewhere, such as in an endless series of working-class jobs. The resigned-sounding rhythm (long/short etc.) exclusively on that pitch plays into this sense by marking E as inevitable in both halves of the riff. The gestures that follow unsuccessfully attempt to escape from that pitch, and all of this parallels the lyrics’ sense of incompleteness and of the impossibility of escape.

“Working Man” (Verse 1, 0:12-37): I get up at seven, yeah, and I go to work at nine.  
 I got no time for living. Yes, I’m working all the time.  
 It seems to me I could live my life a lot better than I think I am.  
 I guess that’s why they call me, they call me the working man.

The riff continues throughout the verses, and Lee similarly restricts his vocal range to a five-note, pentatonic style (see Example 2.2).

**Example 2.2: Vocal Line Opening of “Working Man” (with Riff), at 0:12<sup>2</sup>**

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It features a vocal line starting with a quarter note followed by eighth notes. The lyrics are: "I get up at sev-en yeah and I go to work at nine." The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features a guitar riff consisting of eighth notes on the E string, with a slight pitch bend on the second measure. A tempo marking above the first staff indicates a quarter note equals 78.

The material of the verses thus expands the riff’s ambivalent world-weary ethos.

<sup>2</sup> High rock vocals such as this generally fit the range of the treble clef. However, throughout this study I use the convention of tenor (high-male) clefs—treble clefs shifted down an octave.

The song's only approximation of a "chorus" appears over a contrasting, child-like/"taunting" riff. It consists mainly of eighth-notes moving impatiently back and forth across the open intervals of a fourth or fifth (see Example 2.3).

**Example 2.3: "Working Man" Chorus, 0:37-0:46 (then main riff, 0:46-0:58)**

During this section, Geddy Lee repeats the last line of the verse ("They call me the working man"), but he now shifts the emphasis to the root triad of the song's relative major (G/B/D), which, according to convention, attempts to inscribe a positive change. As if in agreement, Lifeson's accompanying eighth-note pattern then briefly shifts to rising gestures that also touch upon G/D. This furthers the "escape attempt," but the section concludes lyrically with "I guess that's what I am" and musically with a return to the oppressive, E minor tonality of the song's main riff. Lee leaps down an octave on the pitch E and thus resigns himself to his working-class "rut." The lyrics of Verse 2, followed by the "chorus" at 1:22-1:31, confirm this:

**"Working Man" Verse 2 (0:58-1:22):**

Yes, I get home at five o'clock, and I take myself out a nice, cold beer.  
 Always seem to be wondering why there's nothing going down here.  
 It seems to me I could live my life a lot better than I think I am.  
 I guess that's why they call me, they call me the working man.

Thus, these early sections of the song inscribe pessimism. However, in a 2002 live version, the band’s subtle, ironic sense of humour emerged when Lee replaced the working-class “nice, cold beer” with the more middle-class “nice glass of Chardonnay.” This working/middle “class paradox” typifies Rush’s career.

Alex Lifeson’s harmonically static second guitar solo (beginning at 2:10) breaks out on several occasions into a much faster middle section (at 3:13-3:32 and 4:34-5:00).<sup>3</sup> He mainly anchors this second solo over a syncopated rhythm that evokes a characteristic, 1950s (“Bo Diddley”) rhythm.<sup>4</sup> This second solo, the syncopated rhythm, and several unison middle sections present the song’s most active (and dynamically, registrally, and rhythmically varied) segment. This music lasts for nearly half of the song and circumscribes the most sustained attempt to escape from one’s negative surroundings. The predominance of sixteenth-notes and thirty-second-notes in these middle sections contrasts with the much slower rhythmic gestures of the rest of the song (see Example 2.4).

**Example 2.4: Instrumental Middle Pattern of “Working Man,”  
at 3:13 and 4:34 (but with numerous variations not shown here)**



The song’s main, plodding riff instrumentally prepares (at 5:18-5:30) for the reprise of Verse 1 (at 5:30-5:54). The band also extends the relatively pessimistic “chorus” (at

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<sup>3</sup> Lifeson plays his first guitar solo (1:31-2:05) over the plodding main riff. He melodically reinscribes the song’s overriding pessimism in a typically flamboyant hard rock vein.

<sup>4</sup> A similar rhythm predominates in Buddy Holly’s “Not Fade Away,” which Rush recorded in 1973. However, it wrote “Working Man” about two years before recording Holly’s song.

5:54-6:15). Near the end of the song (at 6:15-6:39), the band then slows down its already-slow main riff. This makes any further escape attempts impossible. Brief, insistent bent-pitch guitar gestures (at 6:39-6:54) and full-band flourishes (at 6:54-7:10) express frustration at the cycle's inevitable, recurring nature.

After dropping out of high school around 1968-69, the members of Rush pursued working-class jobs: assisting a plumber, working in a convenience store, pumping gas, changing flat tires, and painting houses. The band's eventual permanent (1974-) drummer-lyricist sold trinkets to tourists during his failed early music career attempt in England (ca 1970-72). Then, while playing drums part-time in Ontario (ca 1972-74, e.g., in the cover band Hush), he worked at the farm implement dealership where his father also worked. The band wrote "Working Man" around 1971, while still struggling in such low-paying, "dead-end" jobs. Not surprisingly, Rush positioned "Working Man" as the final track on its eponymous debut album, which it recorded in 1973 and released in 1974, just before changing to its new drummer.<sup>5</sup>

### **Contextualising High Male Voices in Rock Music**

As in "Working Man," Geddy Lee often sings in a quite high vocal range. John Shepherd argues that male rock singing must be either macho, throaty, strained, and lacking in depth or else nurturing, unstrained, and using the depth of the chest voice.<sup>6</sup> However, a single voice can vary considerably beyond this. For example, Prince

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<sup>5</sup> In 1999, a UCLA undergraduate from Minnesota told me that he had recently identified with this song because of his similar, working-class employment history.

<sup>6</sup> J. Shepherd, "Music and Male hegemony," in *Music and Society: The politics of composition, performance and reception*, 1987, ed. Leppert/McClary (NY: Cambridge U. Press, 1987), 166-70.

sometimes uses a high singing style to inscribe sex, gender, and/or androgynous role-playing. As discussed by Susan McClary, in the song “Kiss” (1986) Prince uses his voice in a “menagerie of sexual types,” including a kind of “strained” (literally and figuratively) erotic style for purposes of “indeterminate gender identities.” In the song “Do Me, Baby,” he suggests an androgynous singing range and a “trance-like” aesthetic.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to Prince’s varied approaches to the body, pleasure, gender, and sexuality, music by the 1970s U.K. hard rock band Led Zeppelin often includes mystical or spiritual elements. Also, Jimmy Page’s status as a guitar hero considerably deflected Robert Plant’s intense, arguably sexual, singing style. Susan Fast’s ethnography-based work on Led Zeppelin confirms Page’s importance, and male fans identified with Page more than four times as often as with one of the other three band members. On the other hand, a substantial minority of female Led Zeppelin fans *also* primarily identified with Page’s skill, technique, and creativity.<sup>8</sup>

Geddy Lee ended up singing Rush’s lead vocals mostly because he *could*, and a former band member reports that in a late-1960s’ blues-rock version of the band, Lee

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<sup>7</sup> McClary mentions “Do Me, Baby” in “Gender Ambiguities and Erotic Excess in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera,” Chapter 10 in *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance across the Disciplines*, Mark Francko and Annette Richards, eds. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 177-200. In addition to Prince’s gender-bending “vaginal envy,” McClary discusses the unusually altered blues progressions of “Kiss” in *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 153-57. These features demonstrate the depth and conflict of Prince’s original that Tom Jones’ excludes in his cover version and video with the Art of Noise. See also Robert Walser, “Prince as Queer Poststructuralist,” *Popular Music and Society* 19 (1994), 85-86.

Anne Danielson discusses Prince’s various singing styles on *Diamonds and Pearls* (1991) as “different roles that Prince is playing” and as an “exaggerated way of singing.” See Danielson, “His name was Prince: a study of *Diamonds and Pearls*,” in *Popular Music*, vol. 16.3, ed. Dave Laing and Sarah Thornton (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 279.

<sup>8</sup> See Susan Fast, “Rethinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman’s View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock,” in *American Music* 17.3 (Fall 1999), 268-74 and 285-88.



“was singing in a low register and had not even thought of singing falsetto.”<sup>9</sup> Over the several following decades, Rush fans became acclimated to Lee’s unusual/high vocal style, but it proved a considerable stumbling block for many rock critics. One of Rush’s earliest concert reviewers (in 1976) called Lee’s voice “a cross between Beverly Sills and Robert Plant,” then in 1979 a rock critic varied this to: “a cross between Donald Duck and Robert Plant . . . .”<sup>10</sup> A concert reviewer in the late 1970s said that the band sounds like a “cross between [U.K. progressive rock band] Yes and Alvin and the Chipmunks . . . with the volume turned up,” and another early reviewer felt that Lee “continues to sound as though he played one football game too many without ample equipment.”<sup>11</sup> An early 1980s Philadelphia disk jockey said: “That singer should be shot for singing like that,” and in 1992 a rock critic referred to his “clawing banshee howl.”<sup>12</sup>

In “The Against-the-Grain of the Voice,” Michael Hicks applies Roland Barthes’ theories about singing to the differences between “roar” and “buzz” vocal styles in rock music. (In “The Fuzz,” he also discusses guitar timbres.) However, because he mainly limits his subject matter to the 1960s, he does not point to related singing styles in hard

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<sup>9</sup> Lindy Young, quoted in Bill Banasiewicz, *Rush: Visions—The Official Biography* (London: Omnibus, 1988), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Baum, “First fall concert rocks Auditorium,” *The Vidette* (Illinois State U.), 31 August 1976. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/isu\\_083176.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/isu_083176.html). “A.N.,” *The Rolling Stone Record Guide* (New York: Random House, Rolling Stone Press, 1979), Dave Marsh, ed. with John Swenson, 336.

<sup>11</sup> Mark McGonigle, “Rush Comes Across Loud and Clear,” *Bethlehem-Globe Times*, 13 Sept. 1979. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/bethlehem\\_091379.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/bethlehem_091379.html). Stephen Ford, “Rush, Runaway concert: Good only as advice,” *Detroit News*, 11 Feb. 1977. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/detroitnews\\_021177.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/detroitnews_021177.html).

<sup>12</sup> Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 50. “M.C.,” *The Rolling Stone Album Guide* (New York: Random House, 1992), Anthony DeCurtis and James Henke, eds. with Holly George-Warren, 611.

rock, even though they often incorporated a variation of the “buzz” style.<sup>13</sup> Relevant singers include Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant, Black Sabbath’s Ozzy Osbourne, the Who’s Roger Daltrey, Free and Bad Company’s Paul Rodgers, Boston’s Brad Delp, Van Halen’s David Lee Roth, Judas Priest’s Rob Halford, and Rush’s Geddy Lee. High singing voices in hard rock resulted partly from a compensation for the extremely wide frequency range of the amplified, distorted instruments.<sup>14</sup> The overtones of a distorted electric guitar resonate especially powerfully in the range of the typical male singing voice.<sup>15</sup> Lee explained that in his band’s earliest music, “The temperament was ‘I’ve got licks to play that I want people to hear.’ It was a cocky, strut-your-stuff attitude, and my singing was extreme too because I had to cut through that.”<sup>16</sup> Rush’s music also includes Lee’s active bass guitar parts. Thus, he may also have developed his high singing style to provide intensity and as a counterpart to his low, primary instrument.

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<sup>13</sup> Hicks traces the origins of 1950s/’60s distorted guitar timbres to the “boot saxophone” timbres (especially in rhythm-and-blues) of the 1940s and 1950s. He also discusses experiments with overdriven guitar amplifier timbres (especially at Chess Records in the late 1940s and 1950s), Howlin’ Wolf’s similarly overdriven vocal timbre (around 1953), and the dissemination of these types of sounds in rock ‘n’ roll and rock music of the late 1950s and 1960s (such as the use of fuzz distortion in certain music by the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix). See Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions* (Urbana, IL: U. of Illinois Press, 1999), 1-22.

<sup>14</sup> Some early songs by the band in question emulated the bluntly sexual, post rhythm-and-blues aspect of some Led Zeppelin songs, of 1970s’ contemporaries KISS and Aerosmith, and of their later contemporary Van Halen, which featured David Lee Roth’s “raucous and flamboyant style” and “screams and other sounds of physical and emotional intensity.” Robert Walser also discusses certain heavy metal singers, such as Rob Halford (formerly of Judas Priest), who similarly overdrive or distort their voices. Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 45.

<sup>15</sup> My idea here of high male voices in rock music being largely the result of compensating for the prominent high overtones in distorted rock guitars was inspired by a talk given at UCLA in 1999 by art critic Dave Hickey of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

<sup>16</sup> Bill Reynolds, “Rush: A Show of Hands,” *Canadian Musician*, February 1989, 39.

Robert Walser summarizes the problem of rock's historiographical hegemony over other forms of popular music by reminding us: "[T]o trace heavy metal vocal style to Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant is to forget James Brown's 'Cold Sweat.'"<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Howlin' Wolf, Big Mama Thornton, and Janis Joplin (a Thornton devotee) overdrove their voices in the 1950s and 1960s. Susan Fast, in her effective critique of Simon Reynolds' and Joy Press's arguments about Led Zeppelin, refers to parody and impotence as ideological stances in Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog" and "When the Levee Breaks."<sup>18</sup> The results of Fast's fan survey also suggest that women not only appreciated the power and sexuality of the music but also held a "deeper" appreciation for its "potency," "interesting content," "raw emotion," and its link between sex and spirituality. Males and females responded nearly identically in this respect.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Geddy Lee continued to perform in a varied, high style even as Rush quickly—and thoroughly—abandoned the "cock rock" of some of its earliest songs.<sup>20</sup>

Geddy Lee does not have a particularly strong chest voice or a "throaty" tenor range, and he thus considers his high range to be his normal singing style. In fact, his singing style most closely parallels the techniques of classical music countertenors. In *The Counter Tenor*, Peter Giles suggests that popular culture has:

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<sup>17</sup> Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> See Fast, "Led Zeppelin: A Woman's View," 253. Fast also reveals that her early fascination with Led Zeppelin had to do with her fantasy of becoming similarly talented and successful (258).

<sup>19</sup> Fast, "Led Zeppelin: A Woman's View," 260-65.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding "cock rock," see Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality" (orig. 1978) in *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, ed. S. Frith and A. Goodwin (New York: Routledge, 1990), 372.

welcomed the male falsetto for the wrong reasons! True, we should rejoice that youngsters seem no longer ‘hung up’ on the *sexuality* of vocal pitch. But surely what they are celebrating, even flaunting, is sexual *ambiguity* for its own purposes.<sup>21</sup>

Giles dismisses “untrained, strained falsettos shrieking” and the “contrived and almost completely commercial” adoption of such singing in popular music. However, he fails to recognize that countertenor singing in popular music only sometimes concerns sexual ambiguity and is generally far more powerful than strained.<sup>22</sup> Rock singers use their countertenor voices for precisely the same reasons as Alfred Deller (1912-79), James Bowman, Daniel Taylor, and other classical music countertenors: an increased flexibility of tone, the enabling of vocal ornaments, the possibility of widely varied dynamics, excitement, power, clarity, and, most obviously, an expanded pitch range.

Giles and other writers use “falsetto” interchangeably with “countertenor.”

However, Canadian countertenor Daniel Taylor differentiates them:

I had my vocal cords filmed by Dr. Chagnon. The cords come together and vibrate essentially like other singers. . . . The video showed me that if I approached a note with an aspirated attack, I could have a healthier sound that would carry better. The glottal attack produces a louder sound at closer range but does not carry. . . . I use falsetto if I want to colour a note a certain way. My natural speaking voice is a baritone. I use this when I want to create an effect . . . a mad scene . . . a villain.<sup>23</sup>

Taylor explained to me in July of 2002 that “falsetto” refers to distancing the vocal cords from each other so that air passes between them, producing a “hooty,” airy sound. Like most classical and rock countertenors, Taylor generally prefers to sing *without* separating his vocal cords. (Either method involves vibrating only one-third of the length of the vocal cords.) Moreover, rock countertenors always use microphones and amplification,

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Giles, *The Counter Tenor* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1982), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Giles, *The Counter Tenor*, 5, 73.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm6-4/taylor-en.html>.

so that even “close-range”/“non-carrying” glottal attacks can prove extremely powerful. As with Taylor, Geddy Lee speaks in a moderate baritone (typical male) range when not on stage. His occasional low singing for narrative effects (as low as the bottom of the bass clef) and his comparatively weak chest voice tenor range also demonstrate that he, like Taylor, is not a tenor but a baritone with a highly developed countertenor singing style. Like Taylor vis-à-vis classical mezzo-sopranos and contraltos, Robert Plant and other rock singers often sing in the same range as Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane (1966-70), Janis Joplin (d. 1970), Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart (1970s-80s), and other female rock singers.<sup>24</sup> As Susan McClary explains, cultural studies’ interest in this topic results from the “problematizing of the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ by feminist and Foucauldian theorists, who have come to recognize that this stringent binary logic is in part a product of the Enlightenment.”<sup>25</sup>

According to John Whitworth, effective countertenor singing involves a:

balance between edgy sinus element—an almost buzzing sensation in the nose and across the cheekbones and behind the front teeth, resonating first on the pharynx, the curved soft roof of the mouth, then up into the skull.<sup>26</sup>

This suggests a semi-nasal, forward placement, which is generally also used for “brightness” in chest voice. In addition to the cord-separating tone production of falsetto,

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<sup>24</sup> As another example, Giles reports that the English composer Henry Purcell (1659-95) had the following voice type: “a baritone chest voice and developed specialist falsetto head voice . . . thereby achieving incredible range.” Giles, *The Counter Tenor*, 46. Conversely, a choral colleague told me in 2002 that he witnessed a trained Tibetan singer singing some of the lowest notes he had ever heard.

<sup>25</sup> See McClary, “Gender Ambiguities and Erotic Excess in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera” (undated copy), 1. She references the following: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Giles, *The Counter Tenor*, 88.

“pure head tone” also involves resonance further back in the head and away from the cheekbones and sinus cavities. Geddy Lee occasionally employed pure head tone, but only when he wished to express a gentle (*mezzo voce* “half voice”), *cantabile* (“sweet”), or otherwise narratively indecisive (less powerful) meaning.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Peter Giles refers to a four-stage countertenor process over a period of “continuous exercising” from 1) an “original soft lyric timbre” to 2) a “rather piercing, sometimes unpleasant, sound” (a “witch voice”) to 3) a transitory sound that adds some “roundness and polish, mixed and coloured by other added qualities” to 4) a final “tempered” sound with the “full beauty of the finished pharyngeal [mixed] voice.”<sup>28</sup> Geddy Lee went through much the same four-stage process: Stage 1 (Led Zeppelin influences) in 1968-73, Stage 2 (“witch voice” or “banshee howl”) in 1973-78, Stage 3 (“added qualities” inspired by new wave/post-punk music) in 1980-84, and Stage 4 (“finished pharyngeal voice”) by 1985. In 1984, rock critic Kurt Loder noted that Lee had “gotten his dog-calling falsetto [sic] shriek under control.”<sup>29</sup> Rush’s limited selection of earlier songs performed live in the 1990s and early 2000s, certain transpositions and vocal melody alterations, and the lower range of most songs originating in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s confirm this.<sup>30</sup> Lee reserved

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<sup>27</sup> Jon Anderson, the lead singer of the U.K. progressive rock band Yes, uses his pure, “hooty” head voice quite often. However, Anderson *is* a natural tenor, and his use of pure head tone sounds quite striking and may relate to the frequent spiritual/mystical themes in his (and his band’s) music.

<sup>28</sup> Giles, *The Counter Tenor*, 109.

<sup>29</sup> Kurt Loder, review of Rush’s *Grace Under Pressure*, in *Rolling Stone*, #424, 21 June 1984, 57. Giles also suggests that a high countertenor can extend his lower range to the F below middle C and his upper range to as high as the D or E a ninth or tenth above middle C. Giles, *The Counter Tenor*, 112-13. With the exception of a few higher pitches (as high as the A above the treble clef) and some occasional bass-baritone pitches (as low as F $\sharp$  at the bottom of the bass clef), many of Lee’s vocals have inscribed this range.  $\sharp$  indicates a sharp (raised) note or chord.  $\flat$  indicates a flat (lowered) note or chord. In the 1980s, he increasingly included his natural baritone chest voice (e.g., in the F to B range below middle C) instead of his countertenor or lower/mixed range.

<sup>30</sup> By 1981, Lee rarely sang up to the D or E a ninth or tenth above middle C. B through C $\sharp$  became

his higher range for contrasting sections (e.g., bridges and alternate verses), to emphasize certain words, and to facilitate backing vocals, which, after its unsuccessful 1973 single, Rush gradually re-introduced starting in 1982.

### **Rock Critics, Musician-Fans, and Ideology in the Post-Counterculture**

Between 1977 and 1981, certain rock critics called Rush's music:

- characterless . . . devoid of intelligence [or] feeling<sup>31</sup>
- proto-fascism like a leper without a bell.<sup>32</sup>
- one gigantic mistake . . . Alpo . . . absolutely nothing to do with rock 'n' roll, or even crossing the street against the light . . . about as dangerous as getting shampoo in your eye.<sup>33</sup>

Comments such as these precipitate a number of questions, including:

- Why do rock critics often differ significantly from rock fans as to what it takes for music to display character, intelligence, and/or feeling?
- Does all rock music have to be confrontational and dangerous?
- Who are rock critics, and who do they represent?

As pointed out by some popular music scholars, rock critics during the late-1960s' counterculture represented the educated middle classes and thus valorized rock music in terms of "high culture" complexity—as non-commercial, sincere, creative, political, and "progressive."<sup>34</sup> However, by the mid-1970s most late-1960s' rock seemed just "rock,"

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his normal high notes in Rush's new music. By 1982, this dropped to A, with the B a tone higher as the rare exception and some songs reaching no higher than E or F#.

<sup>31</sup> Larry Rohter, "Rush: A Heavy Metal Juggernaut," *Washington Post*, 19 April 1977. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/washpost\\_041977.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/washpost_041977.html).

<sup>32</sup> Miles, *New Musical Express*, 4 March 1978. See <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=699>.

<sup>33</sup> Kordosh, "Rush," *Creem*, June 1981, 32.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see Keith Negus's discussion in *Popular Music in Theory*, 154-5.

rather than “progressive.” More importantly, the world views of many rock fans changed during the 1970s/’80s *post*-counterculture to embrace technique, professionalism, entrepreneurialism, and technology, and rock criticism thus represented a smaller portion of its former constituency. In the early 1970s, critics enthused, for example, about ironically detached music by U.S. singer-songwriter Lou Reed (formerly of the Velvet Underground) and U.K. artist David Bowie; in the mid- to late-1970s they focused on punk as a regeneration of the original energy (and confrontational attitude) of 1950s’ rock ‘n’ roll; and in the early-1980s, they valorized post-punk and new wave. Of other rock styles from precisely the same time period, most critics found hard rock “juvenile,” heavy metal “plodding,” and progressive rock “pretentious.” Rush—by making musicianly, instructive music out of combinations involving progressive rock, hard rock, and heavy metal—responded to those rock fans who found *rock critics* to be a wearied and self-indulgent lot.

Virtually from the beginning, the editorial boards of some rock journals proved highly suspect in terms of legitimate countercultural acumen. For example, Jann Wenner began his New York-based *Rolling Stone* (1967-) with a coup over another publisher and then began to include record company ads within a few months. The magazine disparaged fan and musician-fan contexts, such as fanzines and rock festivals, and instead attempted to mythologize certain types of music by elevating them “out of touch” of the varied socio-political streams that fed them. It jumped on some trends, reinforced others, often reversed its position without an explanation, and exuded preppy-ness/trendy-ness—well-photographed, well-privileged, and not having to commit to anything for more than a few weeks (or a few pages). It mainly catered to the Baby Boomer former activists of the late 1960s and to their 1970s/80s’ “Boom Echo” Generation X progeny. *Rolling*



*Stone* alienated the New Left, and the magazine's best writers—notably, Greil Marcus—left.<sup>35</sup>

In the 1980s, numerous writers and media pundits obsessed about the Baby Boomer sociological category “yuppie”—even though it represented a relatively small demographic—1.5 million young, urban professionals in the United States. By comparison, Ralph Whitehead, Jr. identifies a pair of much larger Baby Boomer groups of women and men, also born between the mid-1940s and the early 1960s but representing 75% of the workers in that age range. He describes the first group as effecting a switch from traditional physical labour to support-staff/data contexts:

30 million service workers . . . Neither manual laborers nor coat-and-tie professionals, they make their living in the rapidly growing range between those two extremes. They work as secretaries, customer-service representatives and inside sales persons, underwriters and telephone operators, bank tellers and administrative assistants, police officers and keypunch operators [and] Federal Express truck drivers . . . They often avoid the grime and regimentation of blue-collar work . . .<sup>36</sup>

Two-thirds of this first group are women. Members of the second group comprise:

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35 The writers of *Rolling Stone* often picked certain annual top albums and singles that differed considerably from the top picks of the magazine's readers. Critics with regularly published columns often made well-written cases for certain selections, but the inevitable year-end, decade, and multi-decade lists thoroughly expunged any such reasoning. Moreover, writers associated with competing magazines often profoundly disagreed with one another.

For 1978, writers at *Rolling Stone* valorized Elvis Costello's second album (also highly rated by U.K. rock critics), an album by the Ramones, and songs by the Bee Gees and Patti Smith. By comparison, the magazine's readers valorized albums by the Who and Billy Joel and songs by the Who and Jackson Browne. In 1982, *Rolling Stone* writers (e.g., again citing Elvis Costello) and readers (e.g., again citing the Who) agreed about only one of their Top 6 albums (Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska*) and about only one of their Top 5 singles (the Clash's "Rock the Casbah").

In 1989, *Spin* magazine's John Leland placed Rob Base & D.J. E-Z Rock's 1988 hit "It Takes Two" at #1 on his list of the Top 100 singles of all time, whereas *Rolling Stone* associate Dave Marsh placed the same song at #956 in his 1989 list of the 1001 greatest rock and soul singles. Kevin John Bozelka mentioned this disparity in "Getting Beyond: Spin Magazine in the Late 1980s" (*The 1980s: Popular Music and Culture*, New York University, 1 March 2003). See also <http://www.rocklist.net/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Whitehead Jr., "New Collars and Bright Collars," *Psychology Today*, October 1988, 44.

20 million knowledge workers . . . lawyers and teachers, architects and social workers, accountants and budget analysts, engineers and consultants, rising executives and midlevel administrators . . . computer software engineers . . . They earn their living by taking intellectual initiatives. They face the luxury and the necessity of making their own decisions on the job and in their personal lives . . . skeptical of institutions . . . place a premium on individuality, on standing out rather than fitting in . . . think up their own rules . . . self-entrepreneurs interested in building careers for themselves outside big corporations.<sup>37</sup>

Over half of this second group are women. Whitehead called the first post-industrial non-yuppie Baby Boomer group the “New Collars,” an update of the traditional Blue Collar working/labour class. He called the second group the “Bright Collars,” an update of the traditional White Collar middle/office/management class.<sup>38</sup> Unlike self-absorbed, materialist, careerist yuppies, New Collars and Bright Collars are “defined by their place in a postindustrial society and economy that places a premium on differentiation and rejects the social principles of uniformity and patriarchy that have governed most of [the 20<sup>th</sup> century].”<sup>39</sup> “Neo-Collars,” including the first half of the “Baby Bust” or “Generation X” (born 1962-72), often listened to hard rock and progressive rock. My Rush fan surveys confirm that nearly all hardcore Rush fans fit Whitehead’s post-industrial New Collars (e.g., customer service representatives) and/or Bright Collars (e.g., engineers).

The three types of rock music often disparaged by rock critics in the 1970s and

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<sup>37</sup> Whitehead, “New Collars and Bright Collars,” 44.

<sup>38</sup> By something reasonably close to these terms, my parents and other relatives are New Collars. On the other hand, my high school and undergraduate friends emerged as latter-day Bright Collars. These New Collars and Bright Collars are all Canadians, but Whitehead’s categories also make sense there and thus add about 5 million people to his numbers. Of my Bright Collar friends, a number became computer scientists and engineers, one became an architect, a pair of brothers received Ph.D.s in the sciences, and another became a medical doctor. The architect and doctor both also wrote, recorded, and performed popular music. See <http://brianrudy.com> and <http://wildstrawberries.com>.

<sup>39</sup> Hendrik Hertzberg, “The Short Happy Life of the American Yuppie,” *Culture in an Age of Money* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990), ed. Nicolaus Mills, 81.

1980s—hard rock, heavy metal, and progressive rock—in some ways provided aspects of European “classical” compositional practices within recorded and live music-making. Among other things, this involved pre-composed music and extended forms. For many 1970s and 80s’ New Collars and Bright Collars, certain rock music thus often substituted for classical music’s comparable tendencies. Given classical music’s extremely small market share (about three percent, as with jazz and world music) and its virtual dissolution within educational systems, tens of millions of rock fans—even most musician-fans—could hardly have had more than a passing knowledge of it. On the other hand, classical-type cultural resonances held whether or not an individual ever much listened to real classical music. For example, in the early 1970s Jon Anderson, lead singer of the U.K. progressive rock band Yes, said:

[W]e are beginning to think in terms of whole sides of albums and not just tracks, and making music with more depth. We’re not trying to get *into* classical music, but get what classical music *does* to you [emphases mine].<sup>40</sup>

Anderson means that progressive rock transliterated European art music’s formal complexities (e.g., extended constructions and “depth”) within popular music. He also indicates that classical music *itself* held much less importance than the fusion. Indeed, jazz, psychedelic rock, blues-rock, pop, rhythm-and-blues, soul, folk music, country music, hard rock, and heavy metal also contributed substantially to progressive rock.

Quite apart from Rush’s continuing interests in hard rock, heavy metal, and progressive rock into the 1980s and beyond, rock critics considered the band’s 1975-81 emphasis on individualist narratives highly suspect—definitely anti-left wing and thus, somehow, verging on fascism. An exploration of Rush’s world view—as evidenced in lyrics, interview statements, and musical-stylistic tendencies—reveals an ideology

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Jerry Lucky, *The Progressive Rock Files*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Burlington, ON: CGP, 1998), 37.

brimming with tensions. The band combined aspects of traditional liberalism (espousing individual rights and freedoms) with aspects from the “left” (favouring social justice, sceptical about organized religion and big business), the “right” (valuing property and family, morality, fiscal conservatism, sceptical about big government and the “welfare state”), and “progressivism” (e.g., open to a wide variety of influences, contributing to charities). In Canada, this falls closest to “red tory” or “Progressive Conservative.” It also falls closer to the social democratic (economic) left than to the centre or the right, and, moreover, it is much more libertarian than authoritarian. In 1976, presumably to deflect some of the confusion over the “extreme individualism” of the band’s new album, *2112*, Rush’s guitarist Alex Lifeson, said: “[We] don’t want to change what people think about rock & roll. We just want to show them what we think about it.”<sup>41</sup> In 1977, the band’s bassist-singer, Geddy Lee expanded on this: “We took a risk. . . . [I]ndividualism, concepts of thought and morality are causes that we believe in. . . . We don’t ask that everyone believe in what we do. Let them take our stuff on any level they want.”<sup>42</sup> Seventeen years later, Lee said something similar:

If our music says anything, it’s that we make [it] for ourselves, and we hope other people dig it too. . . . Do what you like, what you think is right, and stick to it. [T]here are a million ways to live, a million ways to write and play music, and you have to figure out which makes you the happiest . . . . We’ve been lucky to get away with that. Not everybody gets that chance.<sup>43</sup>

In 1981, when interviewers implied that Neil Peart was fascist (i.e., authoritarian), Rush’s

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Dan Nooger, “Rush Goes into Future Shock: Music Will Not Exist In 2112,” *Circus*, 27 April 1976. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/circus0476.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Darcy Diamond, “Rush To Judgement,” *Creem*, June 1977, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Andy Aledort, “Guitarist Alex Lifeson and Bassist Geddy Lee revisit their stripped down, power trio roots on *Counterparts*, the strongest Rush release in years,” *Guitar World*, February 1994. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gw0294.html>.

drummer-lyricist said: “I can’t stand the whole concept of law-and-order and authority . . .”<sup>44</sup> Sixteen years later, Peart referred to himself as a “left-wing libertarian,” meaning that he dislikes the authoritarian left (e.g., Soviet-style communism), the authoritarian centre/right (e.g., national socialism), the moderately authoritarian right (e.g., Thatcherite neo-conservatism), neo-liberal anarchism (including economic conservatism), and connections to intolerance, censorship, religion, and industry.<sup>45</sup>

Individualism and libertarianism resonated widely for young adults during the 1970s and 1980s. Certain types of rock music paralleled their post-countercultural attitude towards life: to configure individual creativity alongside existing power structures. Victoria Anne Steinitz and Ellen Rachel Solomon pursued ethnography-based, working-class research in which they quoted a 17-year-old, Boston suburb male (interviewed in 1971) regarding the avocations of his closest friends: “Some like hockey, some like different sports, but most like the same music—hard rock music. Everybody likes going drinking Friday nights.”<sup>46</sup> Importantly, these activities divert people from the

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Kordosh, “Rush,” *Creem*, June 1981, 62.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Scott Bullock, “A Rebel and a Drummer,” *Liberty*, September 1997. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/liberty97.html>. The concept of left-libertarianism perfectly encapsulates Canada during the post-counterculture, a milieu pithily launched by Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s 1967 comment, upon liberalising a number of personal liberty laws: “There is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.” In references to fascism during the mid- to late-1970s, a number of punk rockers sported Nazi swastikas—probably mainly for shock-value. More importantly, a large body of punk rockers became “progressive” by the late-1970s, eclectically expanding their stylistic milieus to include elements from reggae, synth-pop, disco, rap, and other styles. Although such post-punk music differs from Rush’s stylistically, it parallels the band’s eclectic/progressive/individualist approach. U.S. band Blondie opened for Rush at Philadelphia’s Spectrum in 1979, and the Rush fans loudly booed it, getting “the finger” in response. Similarly, Rush’s U.K. fans booed warm-up tapes that included songs by the U.K. band the Police, a response that baffled the members of Rush.

<sup>46</sup> Victoria Anne Steinitz and Ellen Rachel Solomon, *Starting Out: Class and Community in the Lives of Working-Class Youth* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 22. Concerning the same demographic, Geoff Pevere refers to those “kids who’d grown up with bikes, torn jeans, paperbacks, and strip malls just like the boys in [Rush].” Pevere, *Mondo-Canuck*, 184.

everyday drudgery of school or work. An interest in sports, moderate drinking, recreational drugs, and/or music provided relatively harmless recreational outlets for typically serious post-countercultural rock fans who were not interested in dropping out of society (e.g., as with hippies) or in posturing against it (e.g., as with punks). Not surprisingly, humour functions as a similar harmless diversion within the typically serious business of Rush's music.

All of the young men and women interviewed by Steinitz and Solomon focused on their personal activities and interests, on their future contributions to society, and on their desire to rise above the menial jobs of their parents. They indicated that they understood the logic behind high school "course tracking" (e.g., vocational vs. college). Their views of individual efficacy regardless of social status and of wealthier persons voluntarily helping the poor also parallel the views of Rush's Neil Peart.<sup>47</sup> The researchers point to their informants' "belief in the value of hard work" and their related "respect [for] the gains of wealthy people when [seen] as *individuals* rather than as collaborators in the economic system."<sup>48</sup> One of their informants said: "it wouldn't be fair . . . for a janitor to make the same income as a research scientist or 'some smart guy'."<sup>49</sup> Another referred to vestigial proponents of the New Left as "harmless former activists."<sup>50</sup> Along these lines, Rush fans—working-class *and* middle-class—pointed to the band's professionalism, strong work ethic, good role model, unique music, and its

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<sup>47</sup> See Steinitz and Solomon, *Starting Out*, 56, 130, 176.

<sup>48</sup> Steinitz and Solomon, *Starting Out*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> Steinitz and Solomon, *Starting Out*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> 17-year-old Massachusetts suburbanite Greg, 1971. Steinitz and Solomon, *Starting Out*, 49. One former hippie and "harmless former activist," Steve Jobs (the co-founder of Apple Computer), cut his hair, noticeably middle-browed his cultural literacy, and wore suits and ties in order to make his business activities more palatable to the establishment. (The connection to Jobs is mine.)

ability to succeed outside of popular trends—in other words, many of the things about industrial/capitalist individualism that mystified the community of Marxian-leaning rock critics. As someone trying to reconcile the working-class, Protestant context of his background with the middle-class, post-Christian context of his adult life (e.g., occasional temporary academic jobs and semi-professional choral singing), I doubt whether the value systems of these two categories necessarily conflict for post-industrial New Collars and Bright Collars.

The counterculture fostered the uniting of large numbers of certain people for selected causes, whereas the *post*-counterculture fostered individual efficacy as well as differentiated interests. Ironically, the small community of professional rock critics, or at least the magazines (and, eventually, halls of fame) they represented, surreptitiously promulgated a capitalist neo-counterculture in order to profit from championing purportedly “anti-capitalist” and “authentic” forms of popular music. By comparison, vastly larger numbers of fans and musicians bought and sold hard rock music that was imbued with complexities and contradictions of genre, lyrics, form, and technique. Although not quite rivalling *Rolling Stone* in sales, various specialized musicians’ magazines functioned pedagogically for drummers, bassists, guitarists, keyboardists, and others.<sup>51</sup> In the 1980s and early 1990s, most of these magazines regularly featured one or

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<sup>51</sup> See [http://www1.internetwire.com/iwire/distribution\\_magazine?channel=Arts%20and%20Entertainment](http://www1.internetwire.com/iwire/distribution_magazine?channel=Arts%20and%20Entertainment). My research suggests that no major rock periodical or critic, including *Rolling Stone*, the *Village Voice*, *Spin*, the *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*, Robert Christgau, and Dave Marsh, ever included Rush on an annual, decade, or multi-decade list, even when they listed hundreds of items. By comparison, in the 1980s and ‘90s the writers and readers of a number of major musicians’ magazines—including *Modern Drummer*, *Guitar Player*, *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, *Bass Player*, *Keyboard*, *Musician*, and *Canadian Musician*—ranked Peart, Lee, Lifeson, and/or Rush at or near the top of their lists. Similarly, the band received a Lifetime Achievement award from the Musician’s Institute of Hollywood. Musicians’ magazines and related pedagogical contexts catered to musician-fans by providing article-interviews, technique columns, song transcriptions (i.e., musical notation), and equipment reviews instead of album/concert reviews and opinion pieces.

more members of Rush, some eventually placing Lee, Lifeson, and Peart in “Honor Rolls” or “Halls of Fame.” In a related development concerning amateur and semi-professional musicians, dozens of Rush tribute bands performed in a number of countries. Conversely, between 1996 and 2002 a variety of professional musicians made three very different Rush tribute albums, one by fairly well-known hard rock and progressive heavy metal musicians (including members of Dream Theater and Skid Row), one by lesser-known heavy metal and death metal artists (such as Premonition and Disarray), and one by classical string musicians. Alternative rock, trip-hop, and jazz musicians also performed Rush songs.<sup>52</sup> However, the band’s status transcended its “musicianly” core—a *Rolling Stone* journalist disclosed that the magazine’s readers had requested a major story on Rush more often than on anyone.<sup>53</sup>

As Richard Middleton reminds us: “popular music has always been concerned, not so much with reflecting social reality, as with offering ways in which people could enjoy and valorize identities they yearned for or believed themselves to possess.”<sup>54</sup> Rush

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<sup>52</sup> Appendix H lists a wide variety of professional musicians—especially from the U.S.—that musically, verbally, and/or visually acknowledged an interest in at least some of Rush’s music. In the late 1980s and 1990s Dream Theater, the Barenaked Ladies, Vernon Reid, and others occasionally referenced Rush songs. In addition to rock cover versions released of Rush songs (including the first two Rush tribute albums), classical string players (e.g., Rachel Barton and the third Rush tribute album), trip-hop artist DJ Z-Trip, and jazz pianist Dave Restivo also translated certain Rush songs.

<sup>53</sup> Jancee Dunn, article-interview, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Rolling Stone*, 12 December 1996, 33. Similarly, in 1992 the Los Angeles album-oriented rock radio station 95.5 KLOS invited its listeners to vote for their four favourite rock bands of all time. Of the 7825 respondents who voted for the two finalists, 4025 voted for Rush and 3800 voted for Led Zeppelin.

In 1997, Rush deflected interest by the music television channel VH-1 in developing an episode on the band for its popular series “Behind the Music.” Given the band’s lack of scandals and its “squeaky clean” image, the episode probably would have ended up focusing on Neil Peart’s personal tragedies of 1997-98—the unrelated deaths of his daughter and spouse. The episode on Metallica certainly spent a disproportionate amount of time on the accidental death in 1986 of that band’s original bass player, Cliff Burton.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open Univ. Press, 1990), 249.



fans recognized a pattern of success to be recognized in themselves: from middle-class (Bright Collar) and working-class (New Collar) origins, hard-working both individually and collectively, and with the possibility of making widely appreciated contributions despite the negative (at best, ambivalent) reactions of critics. Significantly, “Fly by Night” (1974-75), the first Rush song co-written to completion by Rush’s new drummer-lyricist Neil Peart, concerns “departure” (both literally and metaphorically) and abandoning misconceived plans. The protagonist wants to “start a new chapter, find what [he’s] after.” Musically, the song includes certain tendencies from progressive rock (i.e., shifting rhythms), but it also features elements more characteristic of hard rock (i.e., “catchy” melodies). The band’s chapter/departure philosophical bearing, its progressive/hard stylistic evolution, its “left-brain” (rationalist) worldview, and its semi-literary aesthetic set the tone for its “adaptive” career and audience. Rush also continued to control its own means of production, such establishing its own record label and an artistic “life of its own.” Furthermore, the band simultaneously appealed to members of the working class *and* the lower-middle class. Thus, Marxian rock critics found Rush’s music annoyingly inconsistent according to class and subcultural criteria—rock was supposed to respond, not evolve; to react, not adapt; to hit your gut first and ask questions later. On the other hand, many post-countercultural rock fans felt that Rush’s music did *all* of these things.

## **Weekend Warriors: A Brief History of Rush, 1968-2003**

Rush formed in Toronto in the late summer of 1968 and included 14-15 year-old guitarist Alex Lifeson and his neighbour and schoolmate, drummer John Rutsey.<sup>55</sup> Guitarist-turned-bassist Geddy Lee (recently turned 15) soon joined, and a fourth member, multi-instrumentalist and singer Lindy Young (Lee's eventual brother-in-law), joined around Christmas of 1968. The band mostly played cover versions of well-known rock 'n' roll and rock recordings, initially songs by Cream (e.g., blues-rock), then Jimi Hendrix's "Fire," the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction," Them's "Gloria," Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," John Mayall's "You Don't Love Me," and also songs by Elvis Presley, the Who, Traffic, Ten Years After, and Willie Dixon. Rush re-formed in the fall of 1969, comprising the trio of Lee, Lifeson, and Rutsey and fellow teenager Ray Danniels as the band's manager. The band picked up on the eclecticism, high vocals, and distorted electric guitar of the newly formed U.K. rock band Led Zeppelin. By 1971, Rush played mostly original songs in this vein, and in that year it briefly experimented, once again, with adding a fourth member (second guitarist Mitch Bossi). The Ontario government lowered the drinking age from 21 to 18 in the spring of 1971 (it later raised it to 19), and the band could soon play in bars, including Toronto's Gasworks and Abbey Road Pub, instead of mainly at coffee houses, high school dances, and outdoor recreational events.

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<sup>55</sup> The band name "Rush" certainly implies "adrenaline rush" or "drug rush." The term refers most directly to a substance commonly sold as "video head cleaner" but used illegally as an inhalant narcotic: butyl nitrite. Throughout the 1970s, the members of Rush became increasingly involved in their family lives. Thus, they said very little about the band name's origin, occasionally deflected it as a generic word, and, unlike journalists, consistently avoided using the word for obvious punning.

Geddy Lee said of the band's late-'60s/early-'70s origins:

[W]e were very typically suburban: What you'd call [a] "weekend warriors" kind of thing. We were growing our hair, and . . . "in that club of rebels," I guess is the best way to describe it. . . . [W]e longed to break out of the boring surrounding of the suburbs and the endless similarities . . . the shopping plazas and all that stuff. . . . Th[e] music . . . was a vehicle for us to speak out . . .<sup>56</sup>

The aspect of "escaping from suburbia" alluded to by Lee suggests that even working-class, high school dropouts could exemplify the post-countercultural aesthetic of staking one's claim to a rewarding life and career. Musicians of this type almost always began their careers as "weekend warriors"—i.e., playing rock music on weekends in order to escape from conventional jobs held on weekdays. However, some of them eventually had the opportunity to pursue professional ambitions through recording contracts and concert tours. The success of Rush and other unlikely heroes in the 1970s and 1980s inspired numerous fans in their teens and early twenties to pursue their own goals and develop their own ideals. In any case, the subject matter and musical content of various old and new Rush songs spoke to these concerns as subsequent generations of young fans entered the work force.

On specific early influences on his bass guitar playing, Lee says:

I was first influenced by [Cream] bassist Jack Bruce. Cream was one of the groups that I loved when I was growing up and first got into music in a more serious way. We used to play Cream songs way back when. What I liked about Jack was that his sound was distinctive—it wasn't boring, and it wasn't typical. And he was very busy. . . . He was obtrusive, which I like in a bass player.<sup>57</sup>

By "busy" and "obtrusive," Lee refers to playing notes and passages that do more than

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<sup>56</sup> "Rush—In the Studio" (1981).  
See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/interviews/its1981.html>.

<sup>57</sup> Robin Tolleson, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "Bass is Still the Key," *Bass Player*, Nov./Dec. 1988. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/bp1288.html>.

merely reinforce the bass notes of a chord progression. Cream-influenced—and post-Cream—rock music resonated for tens of tens of millions of rock fans and millions of aspiring rock musicians in the 1970s, 1980s, and beyond.<sup>58</sup> Rush’s music played a part in this. In discussing Rush’s stylistic origins, Lee explains: “I guess in the beginning, we were just a straightforward rock band. We grew out of things like Led Zeppelin, Jeff Beck, and bands like that.”<sup>59</sup> Lee does not wish to argue that Led Zeppelin’s or Jeff Beck’s music is straightforward. Rather, he means that guitar-based, blues-influenced hard rock covers what hundreds of thousands of rock musicians aspired to at the time. By 1970-71, Alex Lifeson played power chords (carefully tuned, distorted open fourths or fifths) and blues-rock electric guitar riffs, largely inspired by Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page.<sup>60</sup> Geddy Lee sang in a high vocal style, largely inspired by Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant. Rush’s first full-length concerts of mainly original songs took place in Toronto and Detroit in early 1972.

In 1973, Rush attempted a hit single cover version of Buddy Holly’s 1957 rock ‘n’ roll classic “Not Fade Away,” with an original song, “You Can’t Fight It,” on the B-side. The single introduced Geddy Lee’s still-immature use of a high, piercing,

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<sup>58</sup> From 1969 to 1974, Lee used a Fender Precision bass, which he had modified into teardrop shape in 1975 and used occasionally until 1977. In late 1974, he began to use Rickenbacker basses (especially model 4001), until he phased them out around 1980. In the same period, he started with a Sunn amplifier/dual cabinet (with SRO speakers) and added an Ampeg amplifier/dual cabinet. See Perry Stern, article-interview with Geddy Lee, “Rush: real life in a rock & roll band,” *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988. From 1968 to 1974, Lifeson almost exclusively used the Gibson ES-335 he bought in 1968 at 15. “ES” refers to “Electric Spanish,” a semi-hollow-body electric guitar type dating to 1936. See Steve Waksman, *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 20-22. In the same period, Lifeson used Marshall JMP head/stack amplification. He purchased a Gibson Les Paul electric guitar and a Fender reverb amplifier when Mercury Records gave the band a monetary advance in late 1974.

<sup>59</sup> Geddy Lee, quoted in *Melody Maker*, 11 February 1978, 14.

<sup>60</sup> See Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 41-45 for a discussion of power chords.

countertenor vocal style to recording, but this type of singing was ill-suited to Holly's pop-rock song. The single flopped, but around that time the cash-impooverished band opened concerts at Toronto's Victory Burlesque Theatre for the proto-punk/glam band the New York Dolls. They also booked off-peak recording time to make a full-length album for a total cost of \$9000. Rush's eventual (1974-82) co-producer Terry Brown, a U.K. expatriate (nicknamed "Broom") who had earlier worked with a number of well-known groups in the U.K. (i.e., the Who, Donovan, the Troggs, and Procol Harum), helped the band complete the album. They judiciously discarded "Not Fade Away" and "You Can't Fight It" in the process. Moon Records (run by Ray Danniels and Vic Wilson) independently released the self-titled album *Rush* in Canada in January of 1974.<sup>61</sup> The album combines Led Zeppelin's acoustic/electric rock eclecticism with boogie/blues hard rock, more in the style of new U.S. bands such as KISS and ZZ Top. Its best-known song, "Working Man" (written in 1971), appealed to the suburban New Collar working class, including late-teens like the ones investigated by Steinitz and Solomon.

Import copies of Rush's eponymous debut album made it to Cleveland, Ohio's flagship rock radio station (WMMS, 100.7 FM) in the spring of 1974; its programmer Donna Halper championed it (especially "Working Man"); and the band suddenly had a much larger audience. The similarity of "Working Man" to a number of Led Zeppelin songs also worked in Rush's favour in the summer and fall of 1974, and Donna Halper suggests that some Cleveland area listeners thought "Working Man" *was* by Led Zeppelin.<sup>62</sup> The band started to play as an opening act at important rock shows (partly

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<sup>61</sup> The front cover showed an explosion, with "RUSH" spelled out in large, bright-red letters.

<sup>62</sup> Interviewed by Bill Banasiewicz. Quoted in Banasiewicz, *Rush: Visions*, 14. Led Zeppelin did not release any new material in 1974.

via U.S. booking agency ATI), and Cliff Burnstein of the U.S. label Mercury Records signed the band to an album deal and re-released the debut album in the U.S.<sup>63</sup> Around this time, original drummer John Rutsey quit the band; he partly cited differences in musical direction (i.e., a continuing interest mainly in blues-rock) as an explanation. In the summer of 1974, just before the band's first major tour (often opening for KISS), St. Catharines, Ontario native Neil Peart replaced Rutsey.<sup>64</sup> By the end of the band's first tour, *Rush* had sold 75,000 copies in the U.S., making it the biggest-selling U.S. debut album in the history of Mercury Records.

Geddy Lee once spoke of Rush's early music as a kind of pre-history:

I can't [listen] back beyond *2112* [1976] really. [I]f I hear "Lakeside Park" [from *Careless of Steel*, 1975] on the radio, I cringe. What a lousy song! Still, I don't regret anything that I've done!<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the band still played a few songs written between 1971 and early 1975 (especially "Working Man") during its live shows in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. Rush's 1974 eponymous debut comprises comparatively straightforward hard rock, based mainly on blues structures and guitar riffs. The lyrics inscribe such things as loneliness,

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<sup>63</sup> Rush almost signed with Casablanca Records, which had just released KISS's debut album. The Mercury version of *Rush* reproduced Paul Weldon's original album cover, except that a technical error turned the word "RUSH" into pink instead of the original red.

The U.K. heavy metal (and hard rock) magazine *Kerrang!* listed *Rush* at #85 on its 1989 Top 100 all-time album list. See [http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang\\_p2.htm](http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang_p2.htm).

<sup>64</sup> During the fall of 1974, Rush appeared on a number of live/radio simulcasts and television shows, including the "King Biscuit Flower Hour," "Don Kirshner's Rock Concert," ABC's "In Concert," and the Toronto show "Boogie." According to former Anthem Records employee and Rush photographer Andrew MacNaughtan, on "Don Kirshner's Rock Concert" the band played "Best I Can" (by Lee, later recorded for Rush's second album, *Fly by Night*) and "In the Mood" and "Finding My Way" from *Rush*. See the interview with Andrew MacNaughtan, "Behind the Camera Eye," *The Spirit of Rush* (U.K. fanzine), #17 (Winter 1991-92) and #18 (Spring 1992)—  
<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/tsorandrew.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Howard Johnson, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "A Farewell to Bings," *Raw* magazine #135 (27 Oct./9 Nov. 1993). See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/raw1193.html>.

friendship and romance, generic anti-establishment posturing, the necessity of having to work for a living, and the sexual pursuit of the opposite sex. Musically, the album combines the comparatively serious U.K. hard rock with the less serious, comparatively raunchy, hard rock of many U.S. artists.

“Finding My Way,” the opening song, deals with a man pursuing a woman even though she ended their relationship when he went on the “road.” It served as a last minute replacement for Rush’s commercially unsuccessful cover version of Buddy Holly’s “Not Fade Away.”<sup>66</sup> “What You’re Doing” opens the album’s second half. It presents, in heavy metal style, an angry tirade against those persons (e.g., record label executives) who would have preferred the band to pursue a more commercial sound. (It thus anticipates the subject matter of several Rush songs from the early- to mid-1980s.) “Here Again” takes its cue from the slower, more mystical and dynamically varied side of Led Zeppelin (e.g., “Dazed and Confused” and “Thank You”). In it, the band seems much more introspective and soul-searching. With the additional exception of “Working Man,” most of the rest of the songs concern relationships, sometimes including the sexual pursuit of a member of the opposite sex.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 11.

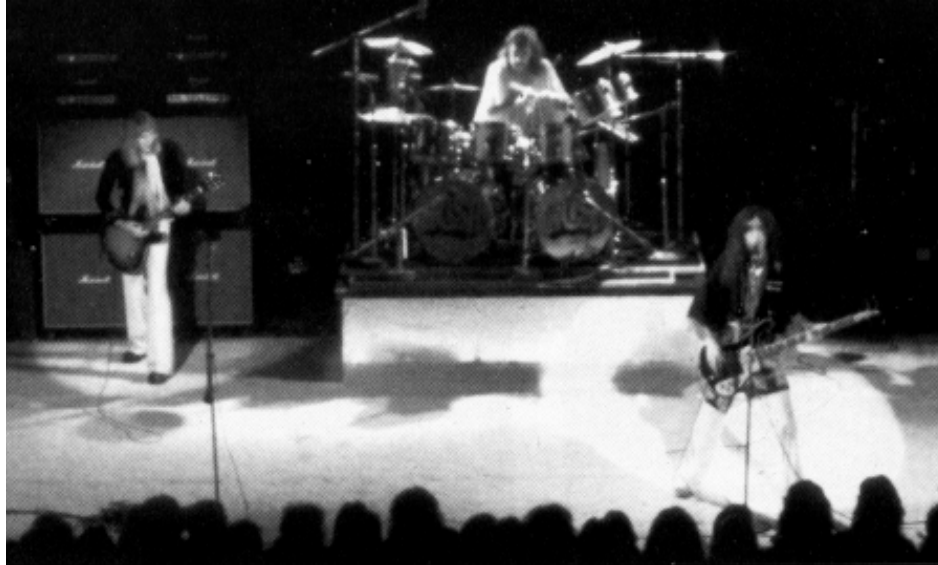
<sup>67</sup> Such songs include “Need Some Love,” the ca 1971 song “In the Mood,” and, after its multi-guitar instrumental introduction, “Before and After.” “Take A Friend” concerns the desirability of close platonic friendships. These songs recall the relationship-based subject matter and riff-based style of certain early Led Zeppelin songs (e.g., “Communication Breakdown” and “Heartbreaker”). However, they also recall certain songs by Aerosmith and KISS, both of which released debut albums in 1973-74 and both of which provided Rush with opening act opportunities around 1974-75.

On all but one song on the album (Lee’s “In the Mood”), bassist-singer Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson are both credited with the music and the lyrics.

**Figure 2.1: Rush in Concert, ca 1974-75**

Lifeson on Gibson ES-335 and dual Marshall JMP heads and stacks, Peart on Slingerland drums (original Rush logo on bass drum heads) and Zildjian cymbals, and Lee on Rickenbacker 4001

(See the Rush WebRing: <http://s.webring.com/hub?sid=&ring=rushring&id=&hub>)



Rush's five studio albums from 1975-78 (discussed in Chapter 3) combine the power-based aspects of heavy metal with bluesy hard rock and certain metrical and structural complexities from progressive rock. Examples include "Anthem" (from *Fly by Night*, 1975), and "Bastille Day" (from *Caress of Steel*, also 1975). The band's breakthrough came with the individualist- and science-fiction-themed *2112* (recorded and released in 1976, U.S. triple platinum in 1995), especially the album's opening 21-minute title suite.<sup>68</sup> The band's first live album, the Shakespeare-referencing *All the World's a Stage* (recorded at Toronto's Massey Hall), appeared later in 1976. The band's two most musically progressive studio albums followed (*A Farewell to Kings*, 1977 and *Hemispheres*, 1978). These included the anthem of diversity "Closer to the Heart" (exemplifying Ralph Whitehead's non-yuppie premium on differentiation), the individualist/explorer mini-epics "Xanadu" and "Cygnus X-1," the extended title suite

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<sup>68</sup> The RIAA certified *2112* as gold in 1977, platinum in 1981, and multi-platinum in the 1990s.



“Hemispheres” (about bridging Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies), the libertarian anthem “The Trees” (reflecting Whitehead’s non-yuppie rejection of the social principles of uniformity and patriarchy), and the band’s dream-inspired epic instrumental, “La Villa Strangiato.”

Rush’s 1975-78 combination of hard rock, heavy metal, and progressive rock evokes the second incarnation (ca 1973-74) of the U.K. progressive rock band King Crimson. In that version of the band, drummer Bill Bruford, bassist/singer John Wetton, and (sometimes) violinist David Cross joined founder-guitarist Robert Fripp.<sup>69</sup> King Crimson’s 1973-74 studio albums *Larks’ Tongues In Aspic*, *Starless and Bible Black*, and *Red* contain a number of extended instrumental passages. For example, “Fracture,” “Red,” “One More Red Nightmare,” and “Starless” include timbrally distorted and rhythmically complex music.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, almost immediately after King Crimson’s “Starless and Red period” (1973-74, featuring the jazz-influenced, former Yes drummer Bill Bruford), Neil Peart replaced Rush’s original, blues-rock drummer John Rutsey. Jazz, Bruford, jazz-rock, and progressive rock all influenced Peart’s drumming. This precipitated a more complex kind of music than seemed likely after the band’s early blues-and boogie-rock and “Led Zeppelin Lite.”

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<sup>69</sup> Some of King’s Crimson’s earlier music (especially the albums *Lizard*, 1971 and *Islands*, 1972) inscribe “psychedelic progressive rock.” However, the band foregrounded virtuosity and modern jazz, unlike the contemporary psychedelic/progressive band Pink Floyd. The heavier, mid-1970s version of King Crimson ended in 1974, with a live album released posthumously in 1975. Compared to Rush’s 27 releases over 29 years, King Crimson’s sporadic output prevented a consistently large following. Rush drummer-lyricist Neil Peart mentions King Crimson drummers Michael Giles and Bill Bruford as important early influences. On the other hand, my Rush fan survey respondents knew almost nothing about King Crimson.

<sup>70</sup> King Crimson’s heavier music of the 1973-74 period alternates with Robert Fripp’s gentler, electric guitar experiments and with somewhat more psychedelic, semi-acoustic music.

Some late-1970s and early-1980s Rush songs demonstrate Neil Peart's affinity for a kind of individualism related to the Russian-born U.S. writer Ayn Rand (1905-82). These include the title and selfishness lyrics of "Anthem" (the name of Rand's anti-collectivist, 1938 novella), the *Anthem*-related epic "2112," and the NASA- and shuttle-boosting "Countdown" (*Signals*, 1982). However, even during Peart's most Randian period, 1975-77, some Rush songs, such as "By-Tor & the Snow Dog" (about a pair of duelling dogs), "I Think I'm Going Bald," and "A Passage to Bangkok" (about finding drugs in exotic locations), showed his—or the band's—lighter side.

By the late 1970s, Rush became a headlining act in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., and it quickly graduated to large arena venues.<sup>71</sup> The band's success enabled it to base its activities in Canada and, in a decidedly libertarian (and Bright Collar) move, to run its own business—Toronto's Anthem Records. Rush recorded its two 1977-78 studio albums in the U.K. and its two 1985-87 studio albums mainly in the U.K., but from 1973 to 2002 the band otherwise recorded its studio albums (thirteen additional albums) mainly in Quebec or Toronto.<sup>72</sup> In the early 1980s, Rush toned down its somewhat heavy-handed individualism as well as its inclusion of extended compositions. On its six studio albums from 1980-87 (discussed in Chapter 4), Rush became "progressive" in the sense

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<sup>71</sup> From the early 1970s to the late 1970s, Rush's road crew increased from two or three to about ten, and everyone travelled in vans. In the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s Rush employed a sound, stage, lighting, and film crew of several dozen. The crew transported the equipment in a convoy of up to five transport trucks (over 900 stage lights in 1982), and the band and crew members travelled in one or more tour buses. See Catherine McHugh's article-interview with long-term Rush lighting designer Howard Ungerleider, "A Rush of Excitement," *Lighting Design*, March 1997 —<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/ld0397.html>. Ungerleider also later worked with the U.S. pop-metal band Queensrÿche.

<sup>72</sup> Rush won Juno awards ("Canadian Grammys") for Most Promising Group of the Year for 1975 and for Group of the Year for 1978 and 1979. In 1979, the Canadian government awarded Rush the designation "Ambassadors of Music." In the 1990s, the band won five additional Juno awards.

of exploring influences from various other kinds of music, especially post-punk (itself influenced by reggae), jazz-rock, and synth-rock.

Rush's second breakthrough came in the early-1980s, with the pair of studio albums *Permanent Waves* (1980) and *Moving Pictures* (1981, the band's biggest-seller, U.S. quadruple platinum in 1995), the band's second live album (*Exit . . . Stage Left*, 1981, recorded in Canada and the U.K.), and its ninth studio album (*Signals*, 1982). These include the *succinctly* individualist songs "The Spirit of Radio" and "Freewill," the mini-epic "Natural Science," the FM rock staples "Tom Sawyer," "Red Barchetta," and "Limelight," the Grammy-nominated instrumental "YYZ" (with some of its rhythms based on the Morse code for Toronto's Pearson International Airport), the band's ode to suburbia "Subdivisions," and the band's only U.S. Top 40 hit—the synth-pop- and new wave-influenced "New World Man." In 1981, Geddy Lee also provided the vocals for the Bob and Doug McKenzie ("SCTV") comedy song "Take Off [to the Great White North]," which charted higher in the U.S. (#16) than "New World Man" (#21).<sup>73</sup>

Starting in 1984, Rush also sometimes addressed global issues, the environment, and interpersonal relationships, but the band managed to incorporate these while maintaining its "musicianly" tendencies.<sup>74</sup> Lee also sang on the 1985 Canadian famine relief song "Tears Are Not Enough," by Northern Lights. The band's albums from 1984 to 1989 comprise *Grace under Pressure*, *Power Windows*, *Hold Your Fire*, and its third live album, *A Show of Hands* (recorded in the U.S. and the U.K.). Rush FM radio "album tracks" from 1984-87 include "Distant Early Warning" (also one of the band's best

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<sup>73</sup> "Take Off" appears on Rhino Records' seven-CD compilation: *Like Omigod! The '80s Popular Culture Box (Totally)*.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. science-fiction author, and eventual Neil Peart short-story collaborator, Kevin J. Anderson dedicated his novel *Resurrection Inc.* (1988) to the members of Rush. (He borrowed certain ideas from the band's 1984 album *Grace under Pressure*.)

videos), “Afterimage” (about a deceased friend), “Red Sector A” (about war), “The Big Money” (about soul-less corporations), “Manhattan Project” (about the inevitability of technological changes), “Marathon” (incorporating metaphors about endurance), “Force Ten,” and “Time Stand Still”—the latter, including its video, featuring guest backup vocals by U.S. singer-songwriter Aimee Mann. In this period, Rush often used synthesizers, samplers, and electronic percussion, and it distilled its 1970s’-style progressive eccentricities into the instrumental middle sections of its songs. From 1982 to 1987, Peart’s literary inspirations included non-western cultures, NASA, Ernest Hemingway, and nature.

On its five studio albums from 1989-2002 (discussed in Chapter 5), Rush tapered off its interest in music technology in favour of somewhat re-engaging the kinds of music it had inadvertently inspired: especially aspects of hard alternative rock and progressive heavy metal. “Show Don’t Tell” (*Presto*, the band’s debut on Atlantic Records, 1989), the Grammy-nominated instrumental “Where’s My Thing?” (*Roll the Bones*, 1991), and “Stick It Out” (from *Counterparts*, 1993) exemplify rhythmically complex, somewhat funk-inspired, yet relatively “hard”-sounding, songs. “The Pass” (*Presto*) reflects on teen angst and suicide and “Nobody’s Hero” (*Counterparts*) similarly reflects on cultural “false heroes,” while “Roll the Bones” (*Roll the Bones*, 1991) somewhat explores African-influenced lyrical themes and rap music, “Test for Echo” (*Test for Echo*, 1996) “gazes” on O. J. Simpson-era reality-based crime TV, and “Virtuality” (*Test for Echo*) can’t quite decide if it likes or dislikes the Internet.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> In 1990, Mercury Records (Rush’s 1974-89 co-label) released the two-CD anthology *Chronicles* (followed by a collection of videos by the same name, later re-released on DVD), and the company later re-mastered the band’s first fifteen albums, not counting the 1978 anthology *Archives*. In 1997 it released two single-CD anthologies (*Retrospective I 1974-1980* and *Retrospective II 1981-1987*), and in 2003 it released a one-CD anthology (*The Spirit of Radio: Greatest Hits, 1974-1987*).

In addition to Rush's continuing work, in the 1990s Peart spearheaded several Buddy Rich (U.S. jazz drummer, 1917-87) tribute projects (*Burning for Buddy I and II*), studied jazz drumming with Rich's old friend Freddie Gruber, made an instructional drumming ("workshop") video, and wrote several books. (Ralph Whitehead refers to the market for instructional videos as characteristic of the interests of Bright Collars.<sup>76</sup>) Lifeson and Lee both made solo albums between 1996 and 2000 (*Victor* and *My Favourite Headache*, respectively), and in 1999 they contributed a version of "O Canada" for the soundtrack CD of *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*.<sup>77</sup> In 1996, Peart released his book *The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa*, and Rush itself also continued to release new music and to tour until the summer of 1997.<sup>78</sup> Shortly thereafter, Peart's only child, Selena, died in a single-car accident. In 1998, his wife, Jacqueline Taylor, then died of cancer. Understandably, Peart went on sabbatical from 1998 to 2000, during which time he stopped playing the drums, undertook several lengthy motorcycle trips throughout North America, wrote a literary travelogue (published as *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road*, 2002), and remarried. However, the on-leave band still had a certain amount of momentum.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Whitehead, "New Collars and Bright Collars," *Psychology Today*, October 1988, 47.

<sup>77</sup> Lifeson also contributed a version of "The Little Drummer Boy" to *Merry Axemas* (a 1997 "guitar hero" Christmas CD) and a multi-track guitar-based theme for the TV sci-fi series *Andromeda* (ca 2000). The members of Rush also performed with others and produced non-Rush recordings.

<sup>78</sup> The U.S. alternative rock band Pavement referenced the disparity between Lee's speaking and singing voices in "Stereo" (*Brighten the Corners*, 1997), and Rush then included it in its warmup tapes:

What about the voice of Geddy Lee; how did it get so high?

I wonder if he speaks like an ordinary guy.

[Other voice:] I know him, and he does!

[First voice:] And you're my fact-checking cuz.

<sup>79</sup> For example, in 1998 the Peart-less Rush assembled its three-CD fourth live album, *Different Stages* (recorded mostly in the U.S., but also in Canada and the U.K.). The band also received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame in 1999 and won "Most Important Canadian Musicians of All Time" (ahead of #2, the Band, and #3, the Tragically Hip) in a 2000 poll taken by the Canadian music e-journal *JAM!*.

Rush reunited in 2001 to make *Vapor Trails* (2002), and it undertook its nineteenth full-length tour in 2002. Some songs from that album, such as “One Little Victory” and “Freeze,” somewhat evoke the band’s early-1980s’ progressive/hard semi-individualism, but “Ceiling Unlimited,” “How It Is,” and others appear somewhat inspired by guitar-jangly BritPop. Some of this music also inscribes emotional resonances hardly heard in Rush’s earlier music. This is not surprising, given the tumultuous circumstances of Neil Peart’s life between 1997 and 2000. Moreover, by 2002 Peart had read books and articles by hundreds of fiction and non-fiction writers, including ancient and Middle English mythology; 19<sup>th</sup> century classic novels; modern and contemporary North American, European, and world literature; literary travelogues (including London, Steinbeck, and Kerouac); and writings about psychology, science, nature, birds, art, cars, and motorcycles. He had also written numerous articles and several books, yet referred to the ideas of Ayn Rand only a few times. Thus, she functioned only as one of many influences on Peart’s thinking. She would never have endorsed absorbing other people’s styles or ideas, and yet Peart once referred to Rush as a “big, musical sponge.”<sup>80</sup> In any case, Peart’s central importance within Rush dates to his earliest days with the band.

### **Looking Forward**

“Anthem,” the opening track on Rush’s second album (*Fly by Night*, recorded in January of 1975 and released the following month) took the band in several new directions, including certain middle-brow/semi-literary aspects of progressive rock, such

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<sup>80</sup> Malcolm Dome, “Interview With Neil Peart,” *Metal Hammer*, 25 April 1988. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/mh0488.html>.

as odd metres, virtuosity, and relatively serious lyrics. By “middle-brow/semi-literary” I refer to a positive aesthetic milieu in which certain types of rock music culturally resonated for reasonably well-read, moderately well-educated, working- and lower-middle class rock music fans and musician-fans. Based on numerous friends over several decades (i.e., from 1979 to 2003) and on my Rush fan surveys (i.e., from 1996 and 2000-01), I reject the widespread, lingering assumption among popular music scholars (e.g., at a progressive rock panel at IASPM-Montreal in July of 2003) that progressive-related rock music necessarily resonates almost entirely for highly educated, classical-music-oriented, upper-middle-class elitists. Rush’s music proved otherwise by emerging from, and succeeding almost entirely within, working- and lower-middle class contexts.

In the 1970s, ‘80s, and beyond, as Blue Collars (i.e., manual labour workers) transformed into New Collars (e.g., technicians, clerks, customer service representatives, secretaries, administrative assistants, courier-drivers, and hundreds of thousands of amateur musicians), Rush’s combination of a strong work ethic and libertarianism appealed to many in that first post-industrial group. In the same period, as White Collars (i.e., office employees) transformed into Bright Collars (e.g., lawyers, teachers, architects, social workers, engineers, consultants, administrators, computer programmers, and hundreds of thousands of additional musicians), Rush’s entrepreneurial values and individualism appealed to many in that second post-industrial group. Hundreds of thousands of hard-core fans in both groups found Rush’s music sublimely and quintessentially post-countercultural.

## Chapter 3—Keep on Looking Forward:

### Individualism and the Progressive/Hard/Metallic Alloy, 1975-78

**Interviewer:** “[Ayn Rand’s individualist architect character] Howard Roark [*The Fountainhead*, 1943] . . . was a motherfucker . . . . He did what he wanted to . . . he was shunned by society. Why don’t you write an album about him?”

**Response:** “I think everything I do has Howard Roark in it, you know, as much as anything.”<sup>1</sup>

-interview with Neil Peart, 1981

“Neil Peart’s rugged individualism makes Metallica’s James Hetfield seem like a Commie by comparison.”<sup>2</sup>

-Bob Mack, “Confessions of a Rush Fan,” 1992

By late 1974, Rush’s new drummer-lyricist, Neil Peart, began to take some of Rush’s lyrics into a more literary direction, beginning with songs such as “Anthem” and “Bastille Day,” from the albums *Fly by Night* and *Caress of Steel*, respectively (both released in 1975). Certain works on Rush’s 1975-78 albums, including *2112* (1976), *A Farewell to Kings* (1977), and *Hemispheres* (1978), also applied large-scale musical/formal design—and early applications of concert stage films—to pursue individualism and other topics relevant to the post-counterculture. The band’s three extended works from 1976-77, “2112,” “Xanadu,” and “Cygnus X-1,” embody an engagement with extreme forms of individualism (relating to several types of “suicide”) and as well as its strongest fusions of progressive rock with hard rock and heavy metal. In these works, Peart’s lyrics indicate the influence of a 1938 novella by novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand, a 1798 epic poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and science-fiction, respectively. However, the band also used varied styles, alternating textures,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kordosh, “Rush: But Why Are They In Such A Hurry?” *Creem*, June 1981, 62. The interviewer who made this particular point was apparently Kordosh’s colleague Mark Norton. They do not mean “motherfucker” in the positive, African-American, signifyin’ sense.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Mack, article-interview with Neil Peart, “Confessions of a Rush Fan,” *Spin*, March 1992, 56.



specific gestures, and contrasting tonal areas to explore these topics. The following album, *Hemispheres* (1978), includes the band's last album-side-length suite ("Hemispheres," which somewhat relates to "Cygnus X-1") as well as a succinct libertarian anthem ("The Trees") and the band's first wholly instrumental work ("La Villa Strangiato").

Rush recorded its second album, *Fly by Night* (1975), with the band's new drummer-lyricist Neil Peart in ten days at Toronto Sound in January of 1975. Some of the songs recall the eclectic hard rock and boogie-blues of the band's first album, but others introduce new elements. Lee and Peart's title song, "Fly by Night," features pop-like hooks and a pleasant, moderately fast tempo, but it also shifts among different rhythms within musical phrases.<sup>3</sup> "By-Tor & the Snow Dog," credited to all three members, anthropomorphizes two fighting dogs as medieval knights, one evil (the "By-Tor" or "biter") and the other virtuous (the "Snow Dog"). It depicts the dogs' growling battle instrumentally (with bass fuzztone/phaser effects and guitar whammy/vibrato effects), lasts for more than nine minutes, and connects to the subject matter of Rush's later song "The Necromancer" (*Caress of Steel*, later 1975).

### **"Anthem" (*Fly by Night*, 1975)**

With the exception of a few intentionally dropped beats, all of Rush's songs on its first two albums fit the conventional metre of 4/4 or else the closely related metres of 2/2 ("cut time") or 12/8.<sup>4</sup> However, *Fly by Night's* opening track, "Anthem" (credited to all

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<sup>3</sup> The song became an album-oriented rock (AOR) radio staple. Although it never charted as a U.S. Top 40 hit, it also opens the anthology *'70s Greatest Rock Hits, Volume 1* (Priority, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Geddy Lee's "Best I Can" recalls the riff rock and anti-establishment posturing of "What You're Doing" (*Rush*, 1974), and Lee and Lifeson's "In the End" recalls the slow blues of "Here Again" (*Rush*, 1974) as well as similar Led Zeppelin songs such as "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You" and "Since I've Been

three members), indicates Rush's emerging fascination with rhythmic complexities. In its introduction (0:00-0:33) "Anthem" immediately presents material in the irregular, additive, asymmetrical time signature of 7/8. Most rock songs in asymmetrical time signatures (generally 5/4 or 7/4) drop or add one quarter-note per measure. For example, the verse section of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" (1967) produces a microcosm of the band's earlier practice of dropping beats between song sections and thus sounds like it lacks the last quarter-note of every other measure. Pink Floyd's "Money" (from *Dark Side of the Moon*, 1973) uses 7/4 consistently throughout to underscore its message of "money as the root of all evil" and sounds like the musicians add an extra beat for every two measures of 3/4. Peter Gabriel's "Solsbury Hill," from his self-titled debut (1977), cleverly masks a 7/4 time signature in the service of an allegory about the freedom of having escaped from the "machinery" of his former progressive rock band, Genesis. In the opposite direction—the *non*-masking of "odd" metres—a number of early-1970s U.K. progressive rock bands (e.g., Emerson Lake & Palmer, Yes, Genesis, Gentle Giant, and Jethro Tull) explored the possibility of subdividing time signatures at much faster tempos and with briefer durational note values. For example, they used 7/8, 13/8, 15/16 and other asymmetrical constructions in alternation with more common

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Loving You." The lyrics for "Best I Can" and "In the End" may have been written by Peart.

"Making Memories," credited to all three members, recalls Led Zeppelin songs based around short, "snappy" guitar riffs (and slide technique), such as "Ramble On" and "Gallows Pole." Lee and Peart's "Rivendell" gently evokes J. R. R. Tolkien's (1892-1973) Middle Earth homeland of the immortal elves, a haven of safety and healing for travelers in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55). Thus, the song mirrors the fascination for Rush and its Anglo-American fans with U.K. fantasy literature.

Lifeson and Peart's "Beneath, Between & Behind" embodies a relatively heavy hard rock style and lyrically begins to show Peart's predilection for social critique. The song touches on the irony of transplanted nobility having to contend with waves of working class immigrants and continental expansionism in the aftermath of the American Revolution. The words "Ten score years ago, defeat the kingly foe" refer to the approaching U.S. bicentennial.

*Fly by Night*'s album cover greatly improves on the album cover of *Rush*. It features a painting by Eraldo Carugati of a bright-eyed bird of prey spreading its wings above a snowy landscape.

The band co-produced the album with Terry Brown, who had helped complete its debut in 1973.



This introduction accomplishes several things. First, it complicates Rush's emerging, eclectic hard rock style by introducing elements characteristic of U.K. progressive rock. Second, it establishes drummer-lyricist Neil Peart as an equal participant in the band's musical-social collaboration. (The band wrote certain aspects of "Anthem" during Neil Peart's band audition in late July of 1974, which probably suggests that Lee and Lifeson already wanted to move in this direction, whereas the band's original drummer did not.<sup>5</sup>) Although Peart could also play with a power matched by very few rock drummers, some of his contributions to this early Rush song include a high degree of virtuosity.<sup>6</sup> Third, the song introduces what would eventually become Rush's signature rhythm: 7/8 arranged as 2+2+3.

"Anthem" also established a post-countercultural model for individualism:

**"Anthem," Verse 2 (1:49-2:03):**

Live for yourself: there's no one else more worth living for.  
Begging hands and bleeding hearts will only cry out for more.

**Chorus (1:07-1:23, 2:03-2:26, and 3:36-3:52):**

Anthem of the heart and anthem of the mind.  
A funeral dirge for eyes gone blind.  
We marvel after those who sought new wonders in the world,  
Wonders in the world, wonders in the world they wrought.

**Verse 3 (3:23-3:36):**

Well, I know they've always told you selfishness was wrong.  
Yet it was for me, not you, I came to write this song.

The band must have intended the song as a harbinger ("anthem") of its "progressive hard

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<sup>5</sup> The information about Peart's audition derives from Bill Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions: The Official Biography* (London: Omnibus Press, 1988), 16.

<sup>6</sup> In most of Rush's music, Peart played with the butt-end of his drum sticks flat across an unusually large portion of his drum heads. This enabled considerably louder and fuller sounds than he could achieve by playing with the tip ends of his sticks.

rock” direction, and Verse 1 (0:53-1:07) encourages listeners to “keep on looking forward.” The lyrics’ selfishness motif and the coinciding Verse/Chorus music—an anxiously paced, E major 4/4—suggest a brash swagger, and Lee’s extremely high vocals (averaging nearly an octave above middle C) amplify its intensity. Lifeson’s emphatic, anticipated major chord riff introduces all three verses (0:33-0:53, 1:23-1:36, and 3:09-3:23), and into the verses themselves Lee’s vocal gestures contradict Peart’s backbeat snare. The song title “Anthem” and certain elements of the song’s lyrics invoke the “virtue of selfishness” espoused by Ayn Rand.<sup>7</sup> The quip in the lyrics about “bleeding hearts” suggests that lyricist Neil Peart dislikes liberalism, but in interviews and elsewhere he also indicates a dislike for conservatism. Rock critics probably heard all of these elements as arrogant and self-absorbed, but the music’s fans heard the same features as liberating and instructive: a trio of hard-working, ambitious, twenty-two year old high school dropouts from Canada figured out how to make a unique place for themselves in the highly mediated world of rock music.

Harmonically, “Anthem” stresses the several possible cross-relations between E minor and its parallel major. The band thus chooses to raise one or more of the pitches G, C, and D, depending on the desired chordal effect. The odd-sounding progression G major (and/or C major with G bass)—D major (often presented with A in the bass)—E major appears throughout the song. During the first part of Lifeson’s guitar solo (2:26-3:09), Lee’s active, triplet sixteenth-note bass gestures incorporate many of these same pitches. Moreover, Lee’s consistent long-short rhythms provide a “taunting” quality much more elaborate than the one in the “chorus” sections of “Working Man.” As with

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<sup>7</sup> One of Rand’s early novellas, *Anthem* (1938), concerns a man who rediscovers the idea of individual identity (which Rush presents as “wonders in the world”) but ends up battling a totalitarian state that will have none of it (which Rush presents as “eyes gone blind”). See <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/anthem/> for information about Rand’s *Anthem*.

the opening 34-second 7/8 unison section, the song’s succinctness also reduces its instruments-only portion to 60% (2:36), partly by limiting the guitar solo to 17% (0:44). By comparison, “Working Man” comprises 76% instrumental (5:27) and 33% solo material (2:22). The band starkly states the song’s characteristic G/D/E motion in between the first two verses (at 1:36-1:49) and then especially emphatically at the very end of the song (3:52-4:21, see Example 3.2).

**Example 3.2: Instrumental Ending of “Anthem,” 3:57-4:21**

4th time: drum triplets and to Coda      2nd time: elaborate drum fills

♩ = 128      G      D      E      E      E      repeat three times      Coda E 3

The tonally irrational nature of this pattern conveys ambivalence about the irrational nature of an unaccommodating society. The band also explored this idea in “Bastille Day” (later in 1975) and then much more fully in the extended title-suite of its fourth album, *2112* (1976).

**“Bastille Day” (*Caress of Steel*, 1975)**

“Bastille Day” opens Rush’s third album, *Caress of Steel* (1975). The song exemplifies the relatively successful, shorter type of composition that the band interspersed among its more extended and conceptual fare in the same period. Such longer works include the multi-movement sword-and-sorcery suites “The Necromancer” (12:29 and related to “By-Tor & the Snow Dog” on the previous album) and “The

Fountain of Lamneth” (19:58). Those two works take up nearly three-quarters of this album, thus providing further evidence of Rush’s interest in aspects of U.K. progressive rock.<sup>8</sup> The pop-hook-inflected “Lakeside Park,” also influenced by rhythm-and-blues, lyrically addresses hometown nostalgia and the lost innocence of one’s teenaged years. These topics resonated for many Rush listeners.<sup>9</sup>

As with “Working Man” and “Anthem,” “Bastille Day” uses a varied hard rock style (again without keyboards or acoustic guitar) to argue its ideological viewpoint. Like “Working Man,” it makes use of power chords, 4/4 time, and “four-square” phrases. However, it also features complex, busy rhythms and frequent chord changes. The band uses these elements much more prominently in this song than in “Working Man” or in the post-introduction sections of “Anthem.” Also, as with the 7/8 opening of “Anthem,” Lifeson begins this song with an introductory guitar riff *not* later reprised in the song. The riff announces, as with a fanfare or a film studio motto, a new beginning at the start of this album (see Example 3.3).

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<sup>8</sup> The album credits all three band members with the words and music, but Peart probably wrote most of the lyrics. Starting with *2112* (1976), Rush albums credit Peart with nearly all of the band’s lyrics. Peart’s studio-effected voice speaks the introduction of “The Necromancer.” Lifeson uses a rented Fender pedal steel guitar for part of the song. He also rented a Fender Stratocaster for “Lakeside Park” and borrowed a classical guitar for the “Panacea” section of “The Fountain of Lamneth.” See Schwartz, article-interview with Alex Lifeson, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980 — <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gp0680.html>. The album cover of *Caress of Steel* (late 1975), the first of several dozen (1975-2003) by Rush associate, fellow Canadian, and occasional guest keyboardist Hugh Syme, includes a Tolkien-like fantasy painting (a man standing on a misty mountain top, a pyramid, a snake) and a fold-out design. Syme’s intended metallic colour scheme (to reflect the “steel” of the title) became a more muted, copperish hue at the printer.

The band recorded the album at Toronto Sound in July of 1975, co-producing it with Terry Brown.

<sup>9</sup> Neil Peart named “Lakeside Park” after a park in his hometown of St. Catharines, Ontario. The previous song, “I Think I’m Going Bald,” uses a hard rock, boogie-blues style to inscribe the semi-humorous, self-deprecating subject matter. As with the title track of *Fly by Night*, record companies sometimes included “Lakeside Park” on anthologies of 1970s’ rock. Despite the album’s stylistic ambiguities, *Crawdaddy*’s album review (in a section humorously entitled “Some Slightly Biased Reviews”) suggests that “heavy metal is alive, well and thriving” on this album. No author cited, *Crawdaddy*, December 1975, 65.

**Example 3.3: Introductory Riff of “Bastille Day,” 0:00-0:17**

♩ = 112



Unlike in “Anthem,” this riff *itself* plays up the ambiguity between a kind of E minor in the first half and something implying E major (via the G#) in the second half.<sup>10</sup> Although “Bastille Day” otherwise somewhat resembles “Anthem” (hard rock, between four and five minutes in duration), it contains no “odd metres” and, via the guitar-only opening, somewhat increases the participation of guitar (99%) vs. the bass and drums (86% each). Like “Anthem” it also explores tonal areas to a somewhat greater extent than does the more ideologically restricted earlier song “Working Man.”

The song’s brief, six-note main guitar riff (first presented in repetition at 0:17-0:36) then features an energetic, anticipatory rhythm. It rises four times: twice by leap, then by step, and then by leap again. As in many hard rock songs, this main riff introduces and then underscores the song’s verses (see Example 3.4).

**Example 3.4: Main Riff of “Bastille Day,” 0:17-0:36**

♩ = 112



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<sup>10</sup> In “Anthem,” the major/minor dichotomy inscribes the chord progressions throughout the main part of the song. By comparison, “Bastille Day” initially presents this rather tentatively in its introduction and defers E major until later instrumental sections. The presence of the dominant pitch B and the implied presence of E major in the second half of the introduction foreshadow the extended treatments of those tonal areas in the instrumental section in the middle of the song.



Although the pitches here recall those in the main riff of “Working Man” the faster tempo (112 vs. 78) suggests a much more frantic context, and the several rhythmic anticipations also give a powerful sense of urgency.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the world-weary insistence on low E’s in the earlier song’s main riff, E here functions merely as a starting point. Moreover, the riff’s consistent upward motion gives a sense of “rising,” which perfectly suits the song’s modernist/Enlightenment lyrics about the inevitability of political democracy. The first two verses (0:36-0:45 and 1:15-1:25) outline the sympathetic viewpoints of various observer-participants of the late-eighteenth-century French Revolution. On the other hand, the riff’s fast tempo and frantic nature also risk falling apart musically. Also, the lyrics of Chorus I and II (0:45-1:05 and 1:25-1:45, not set to the song’s main riff) contradict its otherwise-positive/sustained use of E minor’s relative major (G). These choruses suggest that even democracy can go awry, and they subtly change in grammatical meaning as the song proceeds:

**“Bastille Day” Verse 1 (E minor, 0:36-0:45):**

Ooh, there’s no bread: let them eat cake. There’s no end to what they’ll take.  
Flaunt the fruits of noble birth. Wash the salt into the earth.

**Chorus 1 (G major, 0:45-1:05):**

But they’re marching to Bastille Day. La guillotine will claim her bloody prize.  
Free the dungeons of the innocent. The king will kneel and let his kingdom rise.

**Verse 2 (E minor, 1:15-1:25):**

Ooh, bloodstained velvet, dirty lace. Naked fear on every face.  
See them bow their heads to die, as we would bow when they rode by.

**Chorus 2 (G major, 1:25-1:45):**

And we’re marching to Bastille Day. La guillotine will claim her bloody prize.  
Sing, oh choirs of cacophony. The king has kneeled to let his kingdom rise.

“Let them eat cake” quotes Marie Antoinette’s famously out-of-touch quip about the masses, and the “bloody prize” refers to the head of Louis XVI. However, the storming

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<sup>11</sup> This recalls the underlying rhythm of the second guitar solo of “Working Man” in evoking the “Bo Diddley” rhythm also used in Rush’s 1973 cover version of Buddy Holly’s 1958 song “Not Fade Away.”

of the Bastille of the French Revolution took place four years before the comparative nastiness of the king's beheading in 1793.<sup>12</sup>

An extended instrumental section follows Chorus 2, continuing the relative major (G) orientation.<sup>13</sup> After thirty seconds, a contrasting, active, middle section (2:15-2:48) adds guitar solo elements and sequentially rising patterns, which precipitate a shift in the sentiments of the lyrics into the third (and final) intro-verse-chorus segment (2:48-3:23). Verse 3 and Chorus 3 also involve democracy in the western world, but now generalized to refer to the "present" (the mid-1970s). In the post-counterculture, "anger burns" because a corrupt, new nobility flaunts its wealth and power.<sup>14</sup> In this context, Rush insisted on doing things its own way: morality despite freedom; individualism within democracy; libertarianism as guillotine.

**"Bastille Day" Verse 3 (E minor, 2:53-3:03):**

Lessons taught but never learned. All around us anger burns.  
Guide the future by the past. Long ago the mould was cast.

**Chorus 3 (G major, 3:03-3:23):**

For they marched up to Bastille Day. La guillotine claimed her bloody prize.  
Hear the echoes of the centuries: power isn't all that money buys.

The song's chorus utilizes a comparatively optimistic G major, provides a march-like homophonic texture, modulates to its own dominant (D major, through a secondary dominant on A major), and becomes increasingly active rhythmically (see Example 3.5).

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<sup>12</sup> The album title, "Caress of Steel," may also refer to the guillotine.

<sup>13</sup> This includes a unison transition segment (1:45-1:55) and a "jazz-rock" guitar solo (1:55-2:15).

<sup>14</sup> This may refer to corporations and/or the music industry. Peart's distaste for "soul-less" wealth and power later surfaced in a number of Rush songs, notably "The Spirit of Radio" (*Permanent Waves*, 1980) and "The Big Money" (*Power Windows*, 1985).

**Example 3.5: First Half of Chorus 3 of “Bastille Day,” at 3:03**

♩ = 112

G D/F# G C G/B D/A

For they marched up to Bas - tille Day. La

G A D

guil - lo - tine claimed her blood - y prize.

Chorus 1, 2, and 3 all modulate back to E minor in their second halves, and after Chorus 3 (at 3:23-4:05) the band reworks some of its earlier instrumental music. However, this time the material is made consistently frantic sounding, unison-textured, and excludes any elements of the former guitar solo. This provides a powerful sense of a band of ideologically like-minded—though perhaps also confused—individuals uniting for a guillotine-like cause.

“Bastille Day” ends with a cut time (half-tempo), reflective, hymn-like, texturally melody-and accompaniment, instrumental version of the chorus (4:05-4:36). It preserves optimism, however, by remaining in G major to the very end, instead of returning to E minor as at the end of the three earlier choruses (see Example 3.6).

**Example 3.6: Last Half of Chorus-Derived Ending of “Bastille Day,” 4:17-4:36**

♩ = 56

G G D/F# G C C G/B D7

G G/DD7 D7/G G G VG

rall.

This contemplative ending drives home the band’s point that even democracy can lead to unpleasantness (as in the aftermath of the French Revolution) and that individuals wishing to succeed within capitalism have to deal with the tyranny of corporate greed.

**“2112” (2112, 1976)**

Rush first began to advance a libertarian social critique in “Anthem” and “Bastille Day,” but it then took up issues of individualism within a science-fiction context in the opening title suite of *2112*, which the band recorded in early 1976. Neil Peart sets “2112” (with a duration of 20:32) on a futuristic alien dystopia, and he pursues a pro-individualist/ anti-authoritarian subject matter. However, many rock critics associated Rush’s world view with fascism, often using “2112” and Rush’s affinity for Ayn Rand’s individualist philosophy and strongly willed literary characters as evidence. A 1981 article-interview with Rush’s drummer-lyricist Neil Peart refers to Rand’s architect character Howard Roark (*The Fountainhead*, 1943) as a “motherfucker . . . [who] did

what he wanted to . . . [and] was shunned by society.”<sup>15</sup> A contrasting interpretation holds that Roark’s sound principles and his rational/ethical egoism limited his market value to those persons willing to tolerate his views. The interview also calls Rand “fascist” and strongly implies that Rush and its fans also fit such a description. Extreme individualism may be eccentric, but it is hardly fascist.

The “Rand problem” centres around the fact that her “objectivist” ideas first circulated on the periphery of the mainstream (e.g., among some college students) from the late 1950s through the late 1960s. At that time, civil rights, social progress, elements of the welfare state, and Americanist/technological pride (NASA, etc.) all began to transform the Western definition of “liberalism.” By 1980, cultural commentators termed as “conservative” anyone in favour of individualism, post-industrial entrepreneurialism, and smaller government. It made no difference if someone, like me, also abhorred capital punishment and censorship, favoured gun control and abortion rights, and supported increased immigration and the rights of homosexuals and other minorities. “Libertarian” would seem a much more suitable term for such people, and, revealingly, Neil Peart considers himself a:

‘left-wing libertarian,’ noting that he could never be a conservative due to the right’s intolerance and support of censorship. Moreover, the rise of religious fundamentalism in America and throughout the globe ‘terrifies’ him. But he also sees rising intolerance coming from the left . . .<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kordosh, “Rush,” *Creem*, 62. The meaning of “motherfucker” here is decidedly negative. On a somewhat lighter note, in 1977 Marvel Comics dedicated Volume 1 issue #45 of *The Defenders* to the members of Rush, with a story somewhat based on “2112.”

The band recorded the album at Toronto Sound, co-producing it with Terry Brown.

<sup>16</sup> Scott Bullock, summarizing an interview with Neil Peart, “A Rebel and a Drummer,” *Liberty*, September 1997. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/liberty97.html>.

See also <http://politicalcompass.org> for a very useful update of “left” vs. “right.”

Like Rand's, Peart's views fail to align themselves with generally accepted definitions of "conservative" or "liberal." Similarly, Rand's ideas influenced people forming their ideological outlooks while in their late teens and early twenties, and Rush's lyrics and music influenced musician-fans forming their musical worldviews in precisely the same age range. Rand and Rush have both also had rather large "cult" followings.

"2112" transliterates certain ideas from Rand's novella *Anthem* (1938) for the post-collectivist/post-activist/post-countercultural rock generation of New Collars and Bright Collars. The influence appears most obviously in Peart's lyrics, but the *music* of "2112" actually problematizes a direct parallel and resulted in a rather hazy reception. Rand herself detested rock music, but she only wrote about it in relation to the counterculture (especially the 1969 Woodstock festival), a time when collectivist ideas permeated mainstream society. Also, Rand scholarship varies widely, as Chris Sciabarra explained in a message about his review of several late 1990s and early 2000s books about progressive rock (including *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, in which an article related to this chapter appears):

I'm one of those academics who has actually spent time alienating both Rand's critics—and her sycophants. My book, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*, and my co-edited anthology, *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand*, . . . sparked a lot of interest among scholars, and I'm happy to say that the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* is a place that has published scholars on the right, the left, and everywhere in-between. Marxists like Gene Bell-Villada and Lacanian philosophers like Slavoj Zizek are both among our contributors.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Rush fans cover a wide spectrum of ideological positions. Partly, this resulted from the band's inversion of the conventional Western meta-narrative. In classical music's sonata form, for example, the musical equivalent of a hero (a melody or theme)

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<sup>17</sup> Personal email, December 13, 2001. Rand's hardcore followers numbered in the hundreds of thousands (e.g., see <http://www.aynrand.org>, <http://www.wetheliving.com>, and <http://ios.org/> ).

generally establishes order, undergoes some kind of conflict with a disturbing force, then emphatically re-establishes the initial order.<sup>18</sup> By comparison, in “2112” Rush establishes an administrative priest collective as the *anti-hero* of a futuristic, totalitarian star system called Syrinx.

The work begins with an instrumental “Overture” (0:00-4:32, so named on the album), starting with nearly a minute of mechanical sounds, including high filter sweeps and low oscillations played on an A.R.P. Odyssey synthesizer by the band’s cover artist Hugh Syme. These sounds then merge with sputtering, distorted, and echoed bass/guitar chord pairings, which solidify into a highly rhythmic heavy metal riff and begin to preview themes from later in the work, as in an opera overture. Later, the overture incorporates a quotation from Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* (1869).<sup>19</sup> Emerging from the Tchaikovskian battle explosions of the overture comes Geddy Lee’s natural baritone voice (at 4:25) on the only words in this mainly instrumental section: the strangely Christian-overtone “... and the meek shall inherit the earth” (see Example 3.7).

**Example 3.7: Excerpt from “2112—Overture,” 4:25-4:32**

♩ = 108      C                      D                      Am

And the meek shall in - her - it the earth.

<sup>18</sup> See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 160-162 for a concise summary of western literary meta-narratives.

<sup>19</sup> Live performances of “2112,” including versions appearing on Rush’s 1976 and 1998 live albums, also include the audience yelling the syllable “hey” on recurring upbeats of certain rhythmically animated, heavy metal sections of the “Overture.” It probably did not help the critical reception of this work that such a “contribution” recalls mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century fascist rally cries.

Given the chant-like nature of this melody and the narrative's eventual outcome, the band probably intended this as ironic.<sup>20</sup> (See Table 3.1 for an overview of the work.)

**Table 3.1: Overview of “2112” (2112, 1976)**  
(the indicated section names are provided on the album itself)

i) Overture (0:00)	-introduces 4-5 later themes and all subsequent tonal areas except the last -tonal areas: A minor, D, B minor, A, B, and E -ends with battle explosions, then the texture dissipates with Geddy Lee entering on: “. . . and the meek shall inherit the earth” (natural voice, 4:25)
ii) The Temples of Syrinx (4:32)	-“theme 1,” introduces the authoritarian anti-hero priests -uses A minor and B minor in verse-chorus form and violent heavy metal -creates a B minor refrain from material also in the overture -ends with a dissipating texture for guitar only (B minor)
iii) Discovery (6:43)	-“theme 2,” introduces the individual hero “protagonist” -he discovers and explores an “ancient wonder:” an electric guitar -he modulates from D major/B minor to A major (his subsequent tonal area) -gentle and tentative music, but gradually becomes rhythmic and recalls music from latter parts of the overture
iv) Presentation (10:15)	-the hero attempts to convince the priests of the merits of his discovery (in a pleasant, jazzy, pop/rhythm-and-blues style, A major); they dismiss his arguments and explode into a violent, B minor guitar solo (at 13:00)
v) Oracle: The Dream (13:57)	-the hero dreams of exiled individualists on a distant planet -gentle “dream” music at first, then recalls more animated (and previously unrecalled) overture material; B minor, D, A minor, B minor “frame”)
vi) Soliloquy (15:58)	-the hero despairs about “cold and empty” life, D/esp. A minor; ends on E
vii) Grand Finale (18:18)	-violent progressive heavy metal style, recalls especially section ii then material from the end of the overture (including explosions); control “announcement,” E/B modes/F# major (19:58-20:32)

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<sup>20</sup> Neil Peart also sometimes used biblical imagery elsewhere in his lyrics. However, this results from his broad-based literary influences and certainly not from wishing to validate religion. Many Christians interpreted Rush's use of an image of a naked man recoiling from a red pentagram (on the back cover of *2112* and elsewhere) as Satanic, but Satanists position pentagrams with a single point pointing downwards. Peart explains that the image means “the abstract man against the mass. The red star symbolizes any collectivist mentality” (quoted in Kordosh, “Rush,” 61).

See also <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/satanism.html> for Peart's humorous response to charges of Satanism in Rush. Other non-Satanists to use red pentagrams include political leftists, such as the 1990s' U.S. rock band Rage Against The Machine.



In the second section, “The Temples of Syrinx” (4:32-6:43), the band uses heavy metal, Lee’s shrieking vocal style, and a chorus solidly in B minor to portray the collectivist priests. Lee sings extremely high and tensely in this section, marking the priests’ manifesto as just so much irrational “preaching” (see Example 3.8).<sup>21</sup>

**Example 3.8: Excerpt from “2112—The Temples of Syrinx,” at 4:48**

Example 3.8 shows a musical score excerpt from “2112—The Temples of Syrinx,” at 4:48. The score is in 8/8 time with a tempo of 128. It consists of five staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first four staves are in C major, and the last two staves are in B minor. The lyrics are: “We’ve tak-en care of ev-rything - the words you read, the songs you sing, the pic-tures that bring pleas-ure to your eyes. It’s one for all all all for one. We work to-geth-er, com mon sons. Nev-er need to won-der how or why. We are the priests of the tem-ples of Syr-inx. Our great com-pu-ters fill the hal-lowed halls.”

The limited pitch range and nearly continuous nature of the first eight measures (the verse section) evoke the priests’ pride in themselves for some of the things that they control: literature, music, and art. The rhythmic anticipations and shorter phrases of the latter eight measures (the chorus section) further suggest a swaggering pride in their

<sup>21</sup> These barely attainable (for a male singer) pitch levels necessitated transposing the entire 21-minute work down a whole tone in 1996 and 1997 live performances. The version on the band’s 1998 live album, *Different Stages*, is so transposed. (Also, the band wanted to preserve the important tonal relationships among the work’s seven sections.)

“accomplishments.” The priests evoke various controlling forces in the original *Star Trek* TV series (1966-69) and in the science-fiction film *Logan’s Run* (1976).

A section entitled “Discovery” (6:43-10:15) then follows. In it, the *actual* hero of the narrative (an individual male) explores his musically creative side, even though the draconian restrictions of his totalitarian society officially prohibit this.<sup>22</sup> The accompanying music remains tentative and gentle, thus subverting the expectation that a main hero’s music should be forceful and determined. This “protagonist,” arguably much too strong a word in such a narrative inversion, parallels discoverer-hero “Equality 7-2521” in Rand’s *Anthem*. Rand’s hero rediscovers his individual identity, partly through rediscovering scientific principles, technology, and reinventing the electric light. In the “Discovery” section of “2112,” the solitary (anonymous) hero experiments not with the electric light, but the electric *guitar*. Revealingly, in “2112” the participation of electric guitar relative to bass and drums far outweighs the much slighter difference in most of Rush’s music (i.e., 95% to about 66% vs. 92%).

Like Equality 7-2521, Peart’s anonymous hero threatens social order through his individualist predilections. By means of individual experimentation, he learns how to tune the guitar (including Lifeson’s voicing of string harmonics) and eventually to play it. This largely involves increasingly rhythmical/metric sequential figurations. He finds his way from open strings to D major and its relative minor (B) and, finally, to its dominant,

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<sup>22</sup> In a brief correspondence by “Anonymous” (dated 2112), the album’s liner notes indicate the man’s home city as the generically named Megadon, that the planet Syrinx has twin moons, and that “the Red Star of the Solar Federation,” banded the solar system’s surviving planets together fifty years ago and now provide (Orwellian) Templevision and Temple Papers.

Above this, the album’s band photo shows Lifeson, Peart, and Lee wearing Asian-like, silken wraps above bell-bottom pants. Concert photos from this period sometimes show the band members wearing similar flowery/paisley silk vests (sometimes without shirts underneath), and Lifeson apparently sometimes wore bell-bottoms. The band members have long, 1970s-style heavy metal hair, and Peart has a thick, dark moustache.

A major. To further differentiate this individualist hero from the authoritarian priests, Lee sings in a “normal” baritone vocal range when portraying him. The music also remains gentler and more reflective and includes the water-based sounds of falling rain and/or babbling brooks. This drastically contrasts the onslaught just encountered in the “voice” of the priest collective. The lyrics refer to a “strange device [that] gives forth sound” (the guitar). Also, the hero “can’t wait to share his new wonder” so that a wide variety of others will be able to “make their own music.”

In the following section, “Presentation” (10:15-13:57), the hero attempts to convince the priests of the merits of his discovery (“an ancient miracle”) by presenting his argument in a kind of jazz-inflected/rhythm-and-blues style.<sup>23</sup> However, as in the rejection of Equality 7-2521’s rediscovery by the “World Council of Scholars,” the priests here chastise the well-meaning “protagonist” for obviously wishing to incite an individualist social revolution with his rediscovered “toy that helped destroy the elder race of man.” They disparage the guitar as “a waste of time, [a] silly whim [that] doesn’t fit the plan” of contented uniformity. To add to their argument, the priests’ violent, B minor, heavy metal music (from the “Temples of Syrinx” section) reappears (at 13:00). In a guitar solo, and at a much faster tempo, this frenetically develops the ideological position of the priests’ earlier music. The priest-collective’s insistent, impenetrable world-view rejects the individual’s counterarguments.

The narrative of “2112” considerably differs from radicals going up against an establishment. The anonymous hero *wants*, and tries, to contribute to society’s improvement, rather than dropping out (e.g., living communally). This recalls the similar concerns about social and moral contributions expressed by working-class, early-1970s,

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<sup>23</sup> This music relates to the A major music that emerged at the end of the “Discovery” section during the hero’s recent excitement about sharing his discovery with others.

late teens in Victoria Anne Steinitz and Ellen Rachel Solomon's *Starting Out: Class and Community in the Lives of Working-Class Youth*.<sup>24</sup> All of Steinitz and Solomon's informants emphasized their desire to contribute to society. Individual efficacy, regardless of social status, permeates their discourse just as much as it permeates the hero's point of view in "2112." The informants also expressed a "belief in the value of hard work" and a related "respect [for] the gains of wealthy people when [seen] as *individuals* rather than as collaborators in the economic system."<sup>25</sup>

In the fifth section, "Oracle: The Dream" (13:57-15:58), the protagonist-hero dreams of a "strange and wondrous land" of individualists, the works of whose "gifted hands" the society actually fosters and encourages. (In *Anthem*, Rand calls this the "Unmentionable Times.") The initial waking moment after the dream, called "Soliloquy" (15:58-18:18), centres mainly around D major then A minor tonalities. Its intensity rises in a loud, three-part section (16:54-18:18) that brings closure to the hero's portion of the "2112" narrative. At first, he verbally recognizes the "cold and empty life" of his totalitarian planet. Then, his despair deepens by means of guitarist Alex Lifeson's angry, frustrated blues-rock guitar solo in A minor. (Lifeson's rhetoric here includes bent pitches.) This newly established stylistic mode (blues-rock) and tonality (A minor) completely subverts the hero's initial "jazzy" optimism and A *major* tonality of the earlier "Discovery" and "Presentation" sections. However, the "Soliloquy" actually ends in E major, the dominant of the hero's resigned A minor.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Victoria Anne Steinitz and Ellen Rachel Solomon, *Starting Out: Class and Community in the Lives of Working-Class Youth* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Steinitz and Solomon, *Starting Out*, 56.

<sup>26</sup> This continues the strategy of tonal segues between major sections of the work.

Up until this point, Peart's ideology in "2112" fits the optimistic, anti-dystopia-scheming, "ego"-oriented tone of the ending of Rand's *Anthem*. However, unlike in Rand's *Anthem*, according to Peart's liner-note programme notes the "hero" commits suicide at the end of his "Soliloquy." Arguably, Peart's solution perfectly encapsulates Emile Durkheim's idea (*Suicide*, 1897) of "fatalistic suicide" prompted by an excessively controlling society.<sup>27</sup> In any case, this thoroughly shatters any continuing parallel between Rand's and Peart's worldviews. Indeed, "2112" ends even *more* negatively than mere suicide and in some ways anticipates the band's strange, individualist mini-epics from 1977: "Xanadu" and "Cygnus X-1." The "Grand Finale" (18:18-20:32), subverts the conventional heroism meta-narrative. It accomplishes this by reprising the totalitarian/priest-associated heavy metal style of several earlier sections. The music becomes increasingly violent, and it includes chaotic and densely layered (collective) guitar melodies that largely inscribe B-based tonal areas (major, minor, modal, etc.). These different "shades of B" emphasize the irrational, collective nature of the priests. The work then ends extremely forcefully in an unanticipated tonality: F# major, the dominant of the priests' B-based thematic material. This erases the protagonist's identity even more firmly than the preceding soliloquy/suicide section did. The band pairs this abrupt F# major tonal shift with a rhythmic insistence on all instruments, evoking Morse Code for V/Victory: short-short-short-long, as in Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. The extremely noisy instruments also evoke the explosions of the end of the work's overture.

Within the F# major final section, a spoken voice joins the din on the words: "Attention all planets of the Solar Federation" (three times) and "We have assumed control" (also three times). These closing vocals appear with studio effects that make

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Osborne and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Sociology* (Cambridge: Icon, 1999), 39.

them sound disembodied and multiple, and the words relate to the album's liner-note "story backdrop." This tells us either that: (1) an outside force has absorbed the society (including the priests), (2) a resurrected "elder race" (i.e., the pre-authoritarian society) has gained control, or (3) the priest regime has re-asserted its control. The semi-plausible first option would anticipate the 1980s-90s' "Star Trek" Borg collective, which assimilates ship crews, planets, and entire species. Although some Rush fans argue for the second option, to me it seems unlikely, because Peart, like Rand, abhors authoritarianism. Rand's book centres around the idea of a hero privileging the forbidden concept "I" (individuality) over the valorized concept "We" (collectivism).<sup>28</sup> Peart's left-libertarian individualism could hardly favour a group ("We") asserting authoritarianism ("have assumed control"). Also, if the elder race is about to return, why would the protagonist kill himself, which is inconsistent with Rand's novella in any case? Thus, the third option seems the most likely, with the priests annihilating individualist expressions recently inspired by the example of the work's hero.<sup>29</sup>

At the end of Rand's *Anthem*, Equality 7-2521 and his beloved "Golden One" (Liberty 5-3000, the latter decidedly absent in "2112") scheme to dismantle the dystopia.

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<sup>28</sup> Borg drones on *Star Trek* similarly refer to themselves as "we."

<sup>29</sup> Deena Weinstein reports that of her informal Rush fan ticket-line survey respondents, more than 70% believed that Rush identifies with the authoritarian priests of "2112." (Some of them knew all of the work's lyrics.) See Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 124-25, 295. Weinstein often used "2112" as a case study in her course on social theory. Revealingly, she reverted to lyrics only once this confusion became apparent.

Elsewhere, Weinstein writes that lyrics "[a]re ignored, misinterpreted, or misheard. . . . Fans and fan-pandering critics attempt interpretations, but they tend to be superficial and naïve." See Deena Weinstein, "Progressive Rock As Text," Chapter 4 in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Kevin Holm-Hudson, ed., 98. Instead of acknowledging that musical-interpretive analyses offer a solution, Weinstein opts to complain about fans and critics and to ignore music. In fact, interpretive difficulties of this kind mainly result from a lack of knowledge about how music works. The lyrics—but especially the music—of "2112" expand the libertarian, individualist agenda already touched upon in earlier Rush songs. The composition also demonstrates Rush's fusion of hard rock's power with progressive rock's structural complexity.

By comparison, in my interpretation of “2112” Peart’s lyrics veer into a pessimistic, U.K.-inspired ending consistent both with John’s self-flagellation, final rejection of Lenina, and suicide at the end of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and with Winston’s ultimate rejection of Julia and re-absorption into the Party at the end of George Orwell’s *1984* (1949). Similarly, Peart’s narrative resembles Orwell and perhaps aspects of the concerns of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and others—rather than Rand—in its portrayal of the collectivist priests applying advanced technology to control society. Musically, the layered, B/priest-related guitar elements in the penultimate section of Rush’s “Grand Finale,” the simultaneous rhythmic insistence (in all instruments) on F# (B’s dominant), and the multiple/plural “we” voice of the final “control” proclamation defeat the anti-authoritarian/guitar-discovering hero.<sup>30</sup> “2112” encapsulates the post-countercultural desire of young people wishing to contribute to society on individualist—not collectivist—terms.

In “2112,” Rush arguably undercoded its meanings: listeners receive only a “general sense of ‘understanding’” and thus may not correctly interpret the intended meaning.<sup>31</sup> Peart suggests an accidental similarity between *Anthem* and “2112:”

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<sup>30</sup> “2112” somewhat resembles the large-scale structure of Emerson Lake & Palmer’s “Trilogy” (1972), as discussed by Kevin Holm-Hudson in “A Promise Deferred: Multiply Directed Time and Thematic Transformation in Emerson Lake and Palmer’s ‘Trilogy,’” Chapter 5 in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Kevin Holm-Hudson, ed., 111-120.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 173. For example, Reebee Garofalo mentions Rush twice in his widely read textbook *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the USA* and suggests that Rush made a “considered nod toward fascism . . . with 2112.” See Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the USA* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 292.

*Kerrang!* listed 2112 at #12 on its Top 20 “Essential ‘70s” hard rock and heavy metal album list. It also listed it at #24 on its 1989 Top 100 all-time list. See [http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang\\_p2.htm](http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang_p2.htm).

It ended up being quite similar to a book called *Anthem* by the writer Ayn Rand. But I didn't realize that while I was working on it, and then eventually as the story came together, the parallels became obvious to me and I thought, 'Oh gee, I don't want to be a plagiarist here.' So I did give credit to her writings in the liner notes.<sup>32</sup>

Gregory Karl discusses a similar “convergent evolution” in his interpretation of King Crimson’s fifth studio album, *Larks’ Tongues in Aspic* (1973). Even though the album parallels certain features found in classical music, the band’s earlier music (1969-73) *itself* anticipates various of these elements. Similarly, the music and lyrics of some of Rush’s earlier songs established the socio-musical predilection for individualism that solidified convincingly in “2112.” To borrow from Karl’s terminology, Rand’s *Anthem* and Rush’s “2112” developed a “morphologically and functionally similar adaptation in response to the same selective pressures in the environment, but in the absence of any direct genealogical relation.”<sup>33</sup> By 1981 Peart wished to deflect the insinuation that his writing had mainly continued to respond to the same pressures as Rand’s. When certain interviewers first moved to that line of inquiry, Peart initially tried to deflect them.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1974 and 1976 Rush’s musical style changed from something rock critics could appreciate as being related to the musically adventurous side of the blues-rock tradition (e.g., Cream, Led Zeppelin, and Bad Company) to a kind of bastardization involving elements of progressive rock. In a U.S. magazine review of mid-1970s Canadian rock music, Bart Testa states:

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<sup>32</sup> Kordosh, “Rush,” *Creem*, 62. Peart refers to the addition of “With acknowledgement to the genius of Ayn Rand” in the liner notes of the album *2112*.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Karl, “King Crimson’s *Larks’ Tongues in Aspic*: A Case of Convergent Evolution,” Chapter 6 in *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Kevin Holm-Hudson, ed., 122-23. Rush’s music from 1975 to 1978 in some ways evokes King Crimson’s music from 1969-74. Moreover, later in his article Karl suggests that King Crimson’s “early works routinely embody the experience of a fictional subject who is put through dangerous or deadly trials and overwhelmed with extremes of negative affect” (129). Precisely the same holds for certain 1970s’ Rush works.

<sup>34</sup> See. J. Kordosh, “Rush: But Why Are They In Such A Hurry?” *Creem*, June 1981, 61-62.



Rush's *2112* is a rock-opera equivalent to [the science-fiction film] *Logan's Run*, and about as interesting. Rush don't exactly play rock 'n' roll anymore, which may be wise after the slapdash heavy metal of *They [sic] Fly By Night*. Rather, they inflict rock-like spasms to punctuate Geddy Lee's mewling recitations of his [sic] ponderous Ayn Rand sci-fi prose. . . . *2112* is still just lousy reruns of third-rate David Bowie.<sup>35</sup>

Testa makes numerous basic, factual errors in this review, but around the same time some U.K. (and a few Canadian) reviewers sympathized with Rush's "Anglo" leanings towards progressive rock. For example:

[Rush produces] concert rock of the highest calibre, involving a sophisticated light show, extended arrangements, epic lyric-writing . . . . Undoubtedly, Rush are Anglophiles . . . but [they] have a unique flavour about them, working wonders with what might be considered an exhausted vein, the three-piece guitar band . . . . [T]hey don't just blast forth, attempting to cajole audiences with brute strength, but employ a lot of subtle, spacey effects, and fully understand the need for dynamics . . . .<sup>36</sup>

However, even U.K. Rush reviews varied considerably. Certain writers at *Melody Maker* accepted some progressive/hard rock (occasionally, as in the above, Rush) as well as pop music, but writers at the *New Musical Express* preferred supposedly "anti-commercial" (e.g., punk, post-punk, and reggae) and experimental/obscure music.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bart Testa, *Crawdaddy*, December 1976, 73. With the exception of "Lessons" (Lifeson) and "Tears" (Lee), drummer-lyricist Neil Peart wrote the lyrics of *2112*, including the title suite.

<sup>36</sup> Chris Welch, review of *All the World's a Stage* (live album), in *Melody Maker*, 23 July 1977, 38.

<sup>37</sup> Of the five shorter songs on the second half of *2112*, "A Passage to Bangkok" espouses access to recreational drugs in exotic lands in Latin America, northern Africa, and Asia. "The Twilight Zone" provides an homage to Rod Serling, the TV science-fiction genius who had recently died of cancer. (Rush dedicated its previous album, *Caress of Steel*, to Serling.) The song includes whispered background voices, anticipating the introduction of "Witch Hunt" (1981). Lifeson's "Lessons," a snappy/acoustic song about growing up (but with power chords in the chorus), recalls Led Zeppelin. Lee's "Tears," a mellow/semi-sweet song about allowing oneself to fall in love, features the distinctive, sustained, tones of a Mellotron 400 keyboard, played by Hugh Syme. The band designated "Tears" as the album's studio-only production song. The closing song, "Something for Nothing," uses a succinct, hard rock (arguably heavy metal) style to argue for a strong work ethic. A few months later, the band released its first live album: the double-LP *All the World's a Stage*, recorded at Toronto's Massey Hall.

### **“Xanadu” (*A Farewell to Kings*, 1977)**

*A Farewell to Kings* (1977) features Hugh Syme’s album cover of an abandoned marionette-king splayed on a throne in front of urban decay.<sup>38</sup> This evokes Rush’s libertarian view of the artificiality of governments *and* religion, and it also relates to the “truth and wisdom” theme of the album’s opening title track. The album’s back cover reinforces this, by dangling the marionette’s abandoned string mechanisms. “Xanadu,” the album’s second track, begins with several minutes of instrumental gestures that prepare in various ways for the song’s second half. Some of the song’s earliest guitar gestures recall the bell tower carillon melody suggestive of London’s Big Ben (i.e., mi-do-re-sol), which fits with Rush having recorded this album in the U.K. and with Peart basing the song’s lyrics on the poem *Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream* (1798), by the British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). The lyrics feature images of a mysterious, lost paradise that despite its incomparable beauty and enveloping immortality ensnares its discoverer in an inescapable prison of madness. This produces a lonely and bitter “triumph” for its occupant, predicated in the song’s long instrumental introduction with its sense of leaving western civilization, battling nature, and arriving in an exotic paradise in an “eastern land unknown.” This also somewhat parallels the story of Orson Welles’ film debut *Citizen Kane* (1941), in which newspaper magnate Charles Foster Kane, portrayed by Welles, builds a magnificent palace for himself and his second wife

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<sup>38</sup> The band recorded the album at Rockfield Studio in Wales (co-producing it with Terry Brown) and mixed it at Advision Studios in London. It introduced the simultaneous release of new Rush albums in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. (Rush 1974-76 albums appeared in the U.K. only as imports.) See Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 35. The album’s elaborate fold-out design includes the lyrics as well as band photos by Fin Costello (both live and posed). The fold-out also includes the man-and-star logo from *2112*, and Lee, Lifeson, and Peart dedicated the album to their spouses: Nancy, Charlene, and Jacqueline.

The album also begins to formalize the incipient division of labour of Rush’s several previous studio albums. With only a few exceptions from 1977 to 2002, Peart received credit for Rush’s lyrics, and Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson received credit for the band’s music. Peart co-wrote the lyrics for this album’s “Closer to the Heart” with Peter Talbot, Geddy Lee wrote the lyrics for “Cinderella Man,” and all three band members receive credit for the music of “A Farewell to Kings” and “Cygnus X-1.”

(a mediocre singer, for whom he also built an opera house), names the palace Xanadu (thus also referencing Coleridge), and subsequently undergoes an “ambivalence entrapment” quite similar to the one in Rush’s later narrative.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 3.1: Rush Performing “Xanadu” (1977), ca 1978-79**  
 (“Xanadu double neck paradise,” by “camadini”<sup>40</sup>)



The combination of Lifeson’s aggressive stance and facial expression, Lee’s “looser” stance and expression, and Peart’s high degree of concentration exemplifies Rush’s hybrid of heavy metal, hard rock, and progressive rock. The photo can only have been taken during a performance of “Xanadu,” as Lifeson and Lee only used this 12/6 and 4/6 double neck guitar combination in this song. Chronologically, the percussion and synthesizer configurations only fit the eight-month Canadian/U.S./European “Tour of the Hemispheres.”

Coleridge’s poem involves, in part, a vision of a damsel with a dulcimer.

However, Peart entirely eschews such an element, thus paralleling his avoidance of a female companion (contra Rand) for the hero in “2112.” The protagonist of “Xanadu”

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<sup>39</sup> Ironically, a U.K. rock writer referred to “2112” (not “Xanadu”) as “the *Citizen Kane* of Rush.” See A.W.O.L.—The column that asks, whatever happened to . . .?,” *Melody Maker*, 24 Feb. 1996, 11.

<sup>40</sup> <http://community.webshots.com/photo/9596016/9596104uHNFZdmRoI>

remains completely alone in his endeavours and evidently prefers it this way, despite the narrative's eventual outcome.<sup>41</sup> In the song's introduction, Lifeson contributes major-key electric guitar figurations over an E pedal. These, along with accompanying birds, streams, winds, wind chimes, and woodblocks (recalling the brook/rain water references in "2112") initially evoke a lost-in-the-woods "searching" quality. In his rhythmically free guitar figurations (up to 1:49) Lifeson also explores occasional, hesitant non-chord tones as well as the nascent tonal area's dominant and subdominant (B and A). Later (1:49-2:52) we begin to hear his 7/8 (2+2+3) E-major gesture, initially faded in to suggest an approaching protagonist. Richard Middleton refers to "positional implications" as one of a number of "secondary significations" in a musical work. He suggests that a fade-out at the end of a song means "unendingness" or "continuous activity."<sup>42</sup> The various fade-ins toward the *beginning* of "Xanadu" mean the same thing—the protagonist comes out of the woods.

As Lifeson continues his insistent 7/8 gesture (see Example 3.9), his bandmates attempt to counter this with increasingly frenetic interjections on bass and drums.<sup>43</sup>

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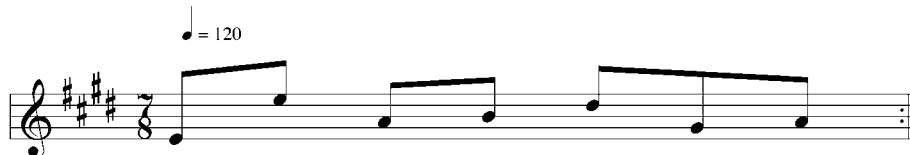
<sup>41</sup> This predates what Robert Walser calls the "exscription" (i.e., intentional omitting) of the female in 1980s' heavy metal. Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 115. Peart's earlier version of "exscription" celebrates ostensibly male elements, such as power, mobility, and "the road." These also appeared around 1978-84 in music by the U.K. heavy metal band Judas Priest. However, none of this evokes the later U.S. heavy metal tendency of misogyny (e.g., W.A.S.P) or "threatening" *femmes fatales* (e.g., Dokken). See also Walser, 114-20.

<sup>42</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 232.

<sup>43</sup> Until this part of the introduction, Lee contributes only subtle synthesizer sounds (i.e., no bass guitar, which is used the same 68% proportion as in "2112") and Peart plays only gentle woodblock and wind chime sounds (Peart playing nearly as much as Lifeson in this song—i.e., much more than in the guitar-heavy "2112"). Later parts of the song get considerably more energetic-sounding, and guitarist-singer-songwriter-author Dave Bidini, of the independent Canadian rock band Rheostatics, succinctly summarizes the whole song as Rush's "monumental work of squelching synths, wind chimes, mystical poetry and hiccupping bass lines." See his "Rock 'N' Roll Memoirs: The sweet Rush of adolescence—How the ultimate local rockers became a high school obsession" (*The Toronto Star*, 6 Jan. 2002, D4).

From 1977 to 1979, Peart used jet-black Slingerland drums (largely replacing his earlier Slingerlands)

**Example 3.9: 7-note/E major Guitar Gesture of “Xanadu,” fades in at 1:49<sup>44</sup>**



Lee and Peart’s varied “objections” attempt to pull Lifeson away from his obstinate pattern (*ostinato*). In particular, Lee’s pitches (especially G-natural) clash with Lifeson’s prominent use of G# and D#. Narratively, Lee and Peart attempt to warn Lifeson that the supposed paradise of Xanadu may end up unworthy of his obsession, but the guitarist-protagonist refuses to abandon his resolve.<sup>45</sup> In the following rollicking and syncopated 4/4 section (2:52-3:34) Peart and Lee change their tack. Their use of E mixolydian (modal), with its flattened seventh scale degree (D-natural) initially seems to move somewhat closer to Lifeson’s way of thinking, but Lifeson counters this by abstracting his former 7/8 obstinacy into its starkest possible form: a stubbornly repeated E major chord.<sup>46</sup> (See Table 3.2 for an overview of the song.)

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as well as Avedis Zildjian cymbals and ProMark sticks (both of which he always preferred) as the basis of his kit. The Slingerland bass drums reproduced the man-and-star “individual against collectivism” logo of 2112. Peart began an association with Larry Allen and Neal Graham of the Percussion Center in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Around 1976-79, he also began to incorporate numerous percussion instruments—chimes, bells, a glockenspiel, and so on—many of these debuting in “Xanadu” and eventually contributing to one of rock music’s largest drum sets. See Cheech Iero, article-interview with Neil Peart, *Modern Drummer*, April/May 1980  
See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0480.html>).

<sup>44</sup> As with most Rush instrumental sections, the “complete” published transcriptions exclude this.

<sup>45</sup> Drummer-lyricist Neil Peart has also suggested that these elements represent the “violent imagery” at the beginning of Coleridge’s poem. Neil Peart, “Roll the Bones,” *Rush Backstage Club* newsletter, October 1991. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/rbcrtb.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Around this time, Lifeson began to play a Gibson ES-355, Les Pauls, and EDS-1175 and EDS-1275 doublenecks. He plays an EDS on “Xanadu.” In 1978, he bought an ES-345 to replace his damaged, decade-old ES-335. (ES’s have semi-hollow bodies.) He also occasionally played a Fender Stratocaster as well as a Gibson B-45 12-string acoustic, Gibson Dove and J-55 acoustics, and Ramirez and Epiphone classical guitars. He plays a Gibson BG-50 mandolin on this album’s “Madrigal,” along with a Roland amplifier and chorus effects. Around 1975-78 he mainly used Marshall amplifiers, plus some Fender

**Table 3.2: Overview of “Xanadu” (*A Farewell to Kings*, 1977)**

bold text indicates recurring material within the work

0:00-1:49	nature sounds and rhythmically free guitar figurations
1:49-2:52	<b>7/8 (2+2+3) E-major guitar gesture</b>
2:52-3:34	<b>rollicking/syncopated E mixolydian</b> (modal) 4/4 section
3:34-4:23	joyous “real” riff, re-establishes E major <i>and</i> 7/8
4:23-4:59	<b>B-obsessed, “Eastern”/exotic</b> , moderate tempo, extended chords
4:59-5:15	Verse 1, gentle/balance
5:15-5:21	transition: <b>modal/Phrygian clues re Xanadu</b> , via F major
5:21-5:53	<b>Chorus 1</b> , fast, E major hard rock
5:53-6:15	<b>Minimoog synthesizer bridge</b>
6:15-6:58	<b>Verse 2</b> (different from Verse 1), soft, reflective; D with “flat-6” B $\flat$
6:58-7:39	reprise of <b>rollicking/syncopated E mixolydian</b> (originally 2:52-3:34)
7:39-8:08	<b>Chorus 2</b> (different words from Chorus 1), fast, E major hard rock
8:08-8:31	reprise of <b>Minimoog synthesizer bridge</b> (originally 5:53-6:15)
8:31-9:08	<b>Verse 3</b> (same music as, but different words from, Verse 2)
9:08-9:32	reprise of <b>B-obsessed, “Eastern”/exotic</b> (originally 4:23-4:59)
9:32-10:10	frustration-imbued guitar solo over the continuing chord changes
10:10-10:14	variation of <b>modal/Phrygian clues re Xanadu</b> (originally 5:15-5:21)
10:14-10:27	reprise of <b>7/8 (2+2+3) E-major guitar gesture</b> (originally 1:49-2:52)
10:27-11:04	coda, including descending fourths, etc.

We arrive in Xanadu through a joyous, 7/8 “real” guitar riff (3:34-4:23). Lifeson re-establishes E major *and* 7/8, but both in a more complex idiom. (Lee’s monophonic synthesizer melody also participates in this.) The band then uses a moderate tempo, extended chords, and Eastern-sounding percussion effects (4:23-4:59) to inscribe Xanadu’s grandeur and exoticism. Gently syncopated adjacent chords provide a transition to the second (sung) half of the song. The lyrics begin (Verse 1, 4:59-5:15) with a carefully controlled balance in the rising versus falling of the vocal melodies, and Lee begins his vocal contributions in a relatively natural, low range. Along with gently rolling rhythms, the lyrics, such as “I will dine on honeydew and drink the milk of paradise,” suggest the possibility of a lasting paradise. The instruments sound the pitch B

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reverb amps. See Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980. For this song, Lee plays a Rickenbacker 4080/12 bass/guitar doubleneck through a Fender Twin Reverb amplifier. Certain sections also feature Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson playing certain parts on a pair of Moog Taurus bass pedals. See Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980. See also Perry Stern, article-interview with Geddy Lee, “Rush: real life in a rock & roll band,” *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988.

in all four chords that underlie this expository vocal section. This reflects a fulfillment of the “dominant” E-based obsession presented earlier. (It also recalls the deferred dominant of the end of “2112.”) However, the following transition (5:15-5:21) uses F major to present modal/Phrygian clues concerning the true, duplicitous character of Xanadu. Based on the lowered second scale degree, *F-natural* resides both a semitone (relatively harsh) above E and a tritone (even harsher) away from E’s dominant, B.

The much faster Chorus 1 (5:21-5:53) continues with dissonances, including a reprise of the G tonality with which Lee warned against Lifeson’s E major during the earliest sections of the work. This also incorporates a tempestuous rhythmic sense, especially compared to the gentleness of Verse 1:

**“Xanadu” Chorus 1 (fast, hard rock; E major/G major/A major, 5:21-5:53):**

I had heard the whispered tales of immortality, the deepest mystery.  
From an ancient book I took a clue.  
I scaled the frozen mountain tops of eastern lands unknown.  
Time and Man alone, searching for the lost—Xanadu.

**[Minimoog synthesizer bridge, 5:53-6:15]**

**Verse 2 (softer, reflective rock; D with “flat-6” B $\flat$ , 6:15-6:58):**

To stand within the Pleasure Dome decreed by Kubla Khan.  
To taste anew the fruits of life the last immortal man.  
To find the sacred river Alph. To walk the caves of ice.  
Oh, I will dine on honeydew and drink the milk of Paradise. Oh, Paradise.

The lyrics, in past perfect then past tense, initially provide an unsettled tone, evoking mystery, immortality, and the pursuit of paradise. Verse 2, in present infinitives and future tense, then gives a sense of being frozen in time in Xanadu. (This recalls the reverse verb tense trajectory from future to present to past in “Bastille Day.”) Lee sings this in a comparatively high range, and the instruments provide a quite fast tempo as well as frantic and confused-sounding rhythms. This also contrasts with the much-gentler Verse 1, even though Verse 2 largely reprises Verse 1’s words.

The central ideological conflict of the song concerns Xanadu's combination of paradise and prison. The band explores this most fully in the song's moderate-tempo, instrumental bridge, falling between the fast chorus and slower verse and including a prominent, plaintively crying-out synthesizer solo (first heard at 5:53-6:15). In this section, the tonal centre shifts to D, but without a voiced third in the tonic chord. The band makes prominent use of a B $\flat$  major chord, based on the flattened sixth scale degree within D. The characteristic meaning of "flat-six"—illusory hope—applies here in much the same way that it applies to certain music from the early-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> In particular, it reveals Xanadu as a false paradise—once there, you cannot choose to leave. As with the pitch B in the earlier, positive-sounding vocal exposition, Lee and Lifeson sound the pitch D in every chord in this section.<sup>48</sup> This calls into question the earlier obsessions on E and B. The lyrics of Chorus 1 (i.e., "Time and Man alone") and the first half of Verse 2 (set to the "illusory hope" D/B $\flat$ ) portray the protagonist as the "last immortal man."

The band next inserts (at 6:58-7:39) the third portion of the instrumental introduction (originally at 2:52-3:34). This recalls its rollicking, 4/4 syncopated idiom and its joyful naiveté about arriving in paradise. However, the band this time uses this E-based section ironically, by skipping the grandeur/exoticism portion heard earlier and plunging directly into an angry-sounding E major hard rock chorus (Chorus 2, "A thousand years have come and gone . . . waiting for the world to end . . .," 7:39-8:08). As before, the crying synthesizer bridge (8:08-8:31) and an "illusory hope" verse (Verse 3, 8:31-9:08) follow. These modifications increase our understanding of the ambivalence

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<sup>47</sup> For example, Susan McClary discusses the idea of "illusory" or "false" hope in relation to "flat-6" chords (especially in Schubert and Beethoven) in her article "Pitches, Expression, Ideology: An Exercise in Mediation," *Enclitic*, Spring 1983, 76-86.

<sup>48</sup> They partially accomplish this through an extended chord on C major.



experienced by the protagonist. Indeed, Verse 2’s “To stand within the Pleasure Dome decreed by Kubla Khan” and “To taste anew the fruits of life the last immortal man” become, in Verse 3, “*Held* within the Pleasure Dome decreed by Kubla Khan” and “To taste my bitter triumph as a *mad* immortal man.” Moreover, at the end of Verse 3 (the song’s final vocals) Lee seems to change “Oh, Paradise” into the much more ambivalent “Whoa, *is it* paradise?” (see Example 3.10).<sup>49</sup>

**Example 3.10: Verse 3 (i.e., vocal ending) of “Xanadu,” 8:31-9:08**

♩ = 128

D(no3rd) B♭ Cadd/D D(no3rd) B♭

Held with - in the Pleasure Dome de - creed by Ku - bla

Cadd/D G D(no3rd) B♭ Cadd/D G

Khan. To taste my bit - ter tri - umph as a

D(no3rd) B♭ Cadd/D G D(no3rd) B♭

mad im - mor - tal man. Nev - er - more shall

Cadd/D G D(no3rd) B♭ Cadd/D G

I re - turn, es - cape these caves of ice, for

D(no3rd) B♭ Cadd/D G D(no3rd) B♭

I have dined on hon - ey - dew and drunk the milk of

Cadd/D G D(no3rd) B♭

Par - a - dise.

Cadd/D G D(no3rd)

Whoa, is it Par - a - dise?

<sup>49</sup> The original poem contains nothing like this. Thus, Rush’s version ends far more ambivalently than Coleridge’s. On the other hand, the printed lyrics and published transcriptions exclude this.

The song ends instrumentally, beginning with a reprise (at 9:08-9:32) of the B-obsessed portion of the instrumental introduction (originally at 4:23-4:59). This evokes the optimism and grandeur/exoticism of its first incarnation (gongs, etc.). However, Lee now counters it with a very obtrusive synthesizer sound on a series of octave descents on the pitch E. This descending gesture parallels the protagonist's insanity and reprimands him with a musical equivalent of: "You asked for it!" Lifeson's reply involves a frustration-imbued solo (9:32-10:10) over the chord changes of this continuing reprise. His use of syncopated rhythms, bent pitches (via whammy bar), and frantic chromatic outbursts underscore this. As at 5:15-5:21, the band uses an unsettled (Phrygian) F major to approach E major (10:10-10:14). This confirms Xanadu as a prison and gives way to a brief reprise (at 10:14-10:27) of Lifeson's seven-note, E-major 7/8 gesture (as in Example 3.9, above). The protagonist now obsesses about *leaving* Xanadu, but he can do nothing except exist in a state of normlessness, existing outside of even the most basic social context until the end of time. In a fascinating evolution from the "fatalistic suicide" of "2112," this fits Emile Durkheim's idea of "anomic suicide."<sup>50</sup>

The coda (10:27-11:04) includes descending intervals of a perfect fourth on the guitar (E and B, in several octaves), musically characterizing the protagonist's descent into madness. The band also reprises the E mixolydian third introductory section, but slows it progressively down. Peart adds sombre chime timbres to reinforce the moral of paradise's illusion. (This recalls the slow, hymn-like instrumental ending of "Bastille Day.") The work ends with a final E major flourish that recalls the aggressive insistence on F# major at the end of "2112." However, unlike the F# hegemony (over everyone) at the end of "2112," the individual in "Xanadu" attempts to transcend society and becomes

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<sup>50</sup> Osborne and Van Loon, *Introducing Sociology*, 41.

ensnared in his *own* key: E major. The album's closing song, "Cygnus X-1," takes this extreme kind of individualism even further.

**"Cygnus X-1" (*A Farewell To Kings*, 1977)**

One of Rush's most musically progressive songs, "Cygnus X-1: Book One—The Voyage," features a substantial amount of electronically generated sounds and sound effects, frequent metrical complexities (28% in asymmetrical metres alone), a large number of tonal areas (eight), a high degree of unison playing (35%), and one of the smallest sung proportions on Rush's first five studio albums (16%). In 1971-72 University of Toronto astrophysicist Tom Bolton assembled solid evidence (reported in *Nature*, February 1972 and in *Nature Physical Science*, December 1972) that an X-ray source in the constellation Cygnus—Cygnus X-1—indicated the presence of a black hole. (Until that time, black holes existed only theoretically.) Rush initially describes the phenomenon in its "Prologue" (so named in the liner notes, 0:00-5:01), which includes Rush's co-producer Terry Brown ("Broon") speaking an introductory passage (0:31-0:59) in an "ominous" British accent: "In the constellation of Cygnus, there lurks a mysterious, invisible force: the black hole of Cygnus X-1 . . . ." To inscribe the black hole's mysterious nature as an invisible X-ray source, the recording masks and alters these words through studio effects. These include a large amount of sibilance (hissing) and recall the end of "2112."

The underlying music of the prologue features electronically generated, complex, bell-like tones and relatively arhythmic presentations of a whole-tone pitch cluster: E, F#, G#, and A#. The recording achieves these ambiguous sounds through a combination of effects pedals and delay loops, and the pitch cluster depicts the Cygnus star before it

transforms into a black hole. The absence of a tonal centre parallels the initial ambiguity of the rhythms, but sporadic G#s and C#s (in several octaves) begin to anticipate the subsequent changes in the music’s texture, such as the sounds of explosions (or, more accurately, implosions). These coincide with the spoken “final flash of glory” as the star becomes infinitely dense, disappears from the visual spectrum, and becomes a black hole. The mysterious, bell-like sounds continue (at 1:15), but now voicing an open fifth (E and B) in order to inscribe this change. Geddy Lee enters on bass guitar (at 1:24) with a repeated, ascending pattern. By fading this in, the recording suggests something approaching from a vast distance. (This recalls the fade-in of Lifeson’s protagonist at the beginning of “Xanadu” as well as Middleton’s comments about the positional implications of fade-outs.) As Peart (at 2:12) and Lifeson (at 2:24) join Lee, they increasingly organize the pattern into regular metrical alternations involving 6/4, 7/4, and 4/4. (This recalls the guitar-discovering hero of “2112” and the obsessed protagonist of “Xanadu.”) We eventually discover that the pattern represents a solitary, male astronaut arriving to explore Cygnus X-1. (See Table 3.3 for an overview of the song.)

**Table 3.3: Overview of “Cygnus X-1” (*A Farewell to Kings*, 1977)**

bold text indicates recurring material within the work

0:00-1:24	sound effect clusters, spoken intro, transformation to E/B open fifth
1:24-2:56	ascending bass, later drums and guitar (regularizing complex rhythms)
2:56-3:21	<b>A/C singularity motion</b> , then <b>three-part elaboration</b> (est. C major)
3:21-3:36	<b>fast/chaotic 12/8 C# minor</b> , then <b>unison ascent/escape</b>
3:36-5:01	C minor, alternates between 11/8 and 12/8 (plus F# major, etc.)
5:01-5:23	vocal intro, A/C-based, gentle then elaborated in hard rock style
5:23-5:46	<b>three-part elaboration</b> with vocals (originally 3:06-3:21)
5:46-6:28	joyous, C major hard rock section
6:28-7:12	C minor “siren song,” <b>unison ascent/escape</b> with vocals, guitar solo
7:12-8:34	variant of <b>A/C singularity motion</b> (now C, A <sup>b</sup> , B), plus elaboration
8:34-9:40	reprise of <b>fast/chaotic 12/8 C# minor</b> with vocals, ends on C major
9:40-10:21	coda: strange, ambiguous, guitar chords

As in the long introduction to “Xanadu,” several additional instrumental gestures then follow. The first (2:56-3:06) oscillates between octave As and Cs in extremely regular 4/4 time. These insistent pitches and rhythms represent the black hole’s “singularity” as an X-ray source. The following music (3:06-3:21) elaborates this A/C motion with a group of three chromatically descending three-chord sequences. Peart intersperses these with elaborate drum fills.<sup>51</sup> The band states the cycle twice and ends on C major, with the complexity of the elaborations providing a sense of the black hole’s complexity. The second time through, the three-part cycle bypasses an A-based pivot chord and goes directly from C major to C# minor. This precipitates some very fast, chaotic, 12/8 music (3:21-3:31). The tempo outlines 176 dotted quarter-notes per minute, with eighth-notes consequently moving at 528 beats per minute. This brief section explores harmonic cross relations involving G-natural and G#.<sup>52</sup> It evokes the paradox that something so powerful and complex—a black hole *or* a cross relation—can be unseen. However, the band aborts this after only two times through the pattern. They escape from it through a series of relatively slow, ascending, unison semitones (3:31-3:36). Segues such as this one recall the similar transitions between sections in “2112” and “Xanadu” (see Example 3.11). Rush, as with most progressive-oriented rock bands, wrote large-scale music precisely by assembling such smaller sections.

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<sup>51</sup> The third chord in each sequence makes possible either D major or C major.

<sup>52</sup> These involve the G-natural vs. G# cross relation inherent to C# minor and E minor, and, involving the same pitches, the harsh juxtaposition of adjacent G major and G# major chords.

**Example 3.11: Excerpt 1 from “Cygnus X-1—Prologue,” 3:21-3:36**

The musical score is written in bass clef, 12/8 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 176. It consists of five systems of music. The first system shows a melodic line with chords C#min, Emin, G#, G, G#, and G. The second system includes a [drum fill] section. The third system continues the melodic line with chords C#min, Emin, G#, G, G#, and G. The fourth system shows the melodic line with chords C#min and Emin. The fifth system shows the melodic line with chords G# and G.

This temporally slowed transition melodically reiterates all of the semitones voiced in the preceding chords: G/G#, B/B# (or C), and D/D#. However, F#/G also appears, as an implied secondary dominant to the next section.

The following half-tempo section in C minor (3:36-5:01) alternates between 11/8 and 12/8 time signatures. It also expresses a cross-relational paradox similar to the one in the previous section, but now a semitone lower (F#/G). It also moves from C minor to F# major, inscribing a harsh-sounding tritone (see Example 3.12).

**Example 3.12: Excerpt 2 from “Cygnus X-1—Prologue,” 3:36-5:01 (repeats)**

The musical score is written in bass clef with a time signature of 8/8 and a tempo marking of quarter note = 88. It is divided into two systems. The first system begins with a C minor chord (Cmin), followed by a B minor chord (Bmin), and ends with a repeated F# major chord (F#). The second system begins with an E-flat minor chord (Ebmin) and ends with a D minor chord (Dmin). The top staff of each system contains a melodic line of eighth notes, while the bottom staff contains a bass line of quarter notes. The key signature changes from C minor to E-flat major (two flats) between the two systems.

This music ends on a repeated F# major chord, thus recalling the repeated F# major chords at the end of “2112.” In this case, though, no lyrics have yet been sung.

Geddy Lee finally sings (at 5:01, or about halfway through the ten-and-a-half minute song), and we begin to identify with the protagonist: an astronaut-scientist. The vocal music initially reprises gestures from the preceding instrumental music. This includes a simple melody (over the pitches A and C, 5:01-5:14) sung using a mysterious, studio-effected vocal quality. The band then elaborates this in a hard rock style, with Lee’s piercing countertenor inscribing cross relations and third relations involving A major and C major (5:14-5:23). The earlier three-part section, with a sung text now added to its previous complexities (5:23-5:46), then presents the central ambivalence of this song. The astronaut considers whether the black hole will result in his annihilation or else provide some kind of “astral door” to an undiscovered dimension. (Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick featured just such a portal in the closing sections of the 1968 science-fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.) The music shifts to G major in order to set the words “to soar,” which do so through an electronic manipulation of Lee’s vocal track. Apparently, the black hole *will* provide access to another dimension. He thus undertakes a kind of calculated risk (see Example 3.13).

Example 3.13: Excerpt from “Cygnus X-1—Part I,” 5:32-5:46

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff is the vocal melody in treble clef, starting with a tempo marking of quarter note = 104. Chord symbols above the staff include D, C# (with a sharp sign), B, C, B, and F#7addB. The lyrics under this staff are "At - om - ized at the core,". The second staff is a guitar accompaniment in treble clef, with a 2/4 time signature. Chord symbols above it include D, C# (with a sharp sign), B, and C. The lyrics under this staff are "or through the As - tral". The third staff is another guitar accompaniment in treble clef, with chord symbols Asus2 and G. The lyrics under this staff are "Door, to soar |soar". The fourth staff is a guitar accompaniment in treble clef, with chord symbols G, F# (with a sharp sign), G, F# (with a sharp sign), G, and F# (with a sharp sign). The lyrics under this staff are "soar soar soar soar soar soar]".

G, having just been elaborated by this chromatic ascent, then functions—much like in the prologue (see Examples 3.11-3.12, above)—as the dominant of C.

In the following straightforward, C major hard rock section (5:46-7:12) the protagonist decides to explore the mystery of the black hole, even telling us his spaceship’s name. Greek mythology gives “Rocinante” as the name of Zeus’s horse, Don Quixote’s horse has the same name, and so does John Steinbeck’s glorified pickup truck in *Travels With Charley: In Search of America* (1961). Thus, Peart transforms the traditional mode of transportation for gods and mortals (via Steinbeck’s 20<sup>th</sup>-century variant) into a science-fiction context. The brightness of C major in this part of the song underscores the astronaut’s optimism as well as his desire for exploration and conquest. However, a shift to C minor (the parallel minor, at 6:28-6:45) takes place just as the lyrics refer to the black hole’s X-ray “siren song” and to Cygnus X-1 taking control:



**“Cygnus X-1” (6:27-46):** The x-ray is her siren song. My ship cannot resist her long.  
Nearer to my deadly goal, until the black hole gains control.

This takes the individualism-squashing of “2112” and the paradise-prison of “Xanadu” one step further. The band presents this section’s final six words at a much slower tempo than that of the three preceding phrases. They also set this to the earlier, instrumental, multiple semitone ascent (see the end of Example 3.11, above). The ascending nature of this line and the breathless anxiety of Lee’s vocal style provide a sense of urgency, which continues instrumentally, first with a guitar solo (6:45-7:12) on the chord changes of the immediately preceding C minor “siren song.”

The mysterious octaves of the post-implosion section of the prologue then return (at 7:12-7:53). However, the band replaces C and A with C, A $\flat$ , and B. As in the D/B $\flat$  (“flat-six”) despair eventually present in “Xanadu,” A $\flat$  here evokes illusory hope, with the protagonist hoping that the black hole will provide a means of transformation. Further instrumental complexities follow to drive this point home (at 7:53-8:34).<sup>53</sup> The very fast, C $\sharp$  minor, 12/8 section of the prologue (see the beginning of Example 3.11) also reappears (at 8:34-9:40). However, this time it ends in C major and alternates with brief vocal utterances on the same music. Lee sings extremely high pitches in this section, reaching up to the A above the treble clef. The black hole sucks the astronaut into its “unending, spiral sea,” and his “nerve[s are] torn apart.” But is he *dead*?

As with collectivism in “2112” and paradise in “Xanadu,” the black hole gets the final word in “Cygnus X-1.” The two earlier songs end with loud, unambiguous tonal implications, but this one ends ambiguously, with a mysterious, soft chord progression attempting to reconcile some fairly incompatible chords (9:40-10:21, see Example 3.14).

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<sup>53</sup> The features here include bitonality, a chromatic descent to a new tonal area (E), alternations among measures of 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures, and a transposition of all of this up a tone (to F $\sharp$ ).

**Example 3.14: Excerpt from “Cygnus X-1—Part III,” 9:40-10:21**

The musical notation shows a four-measure excerpt in C minor. The first measure is Cm, the second is Ebm, the third is Em(addF#), and the fourth is Em. The notation includes treble and bass staves with notes and chord symbols above and below.

This recalls the pitch-cluster ambiguity of the early parts of the song’s introduction. It also evokes the open fifth of the star’s transformation (E/B) as well as the kinds of irrational cross relations that earlier represented the black hole’s complexity. This chord progression fades out as it repeats, thus implying that the black hole and the former astronaut continue to exist. Commander Bowman similarly merges with the infinite at the end of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and, like the various sequels to *2001*, the liner notes of “Cygnus X-1” suggest that it is “To be continued.”<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in a further evolution from the “fatalistic suicide” of “2112” and the “anomic suicide” of “Xanadu,” “Cygnus X-1” fits Emile Durkheim’s idea of “egotistical suicide.”<sup>55</sup>

Rush initially experimented with individualism and progressive rock around 1974-75. Then, around 1976-77, the band firmly established a hybrid that combined its propensity for complex time signatures, large-scale form, science-fiction, and hard rock. Around 1978-81, the band then gradually moved away from extended composition, and “Hemispheres” (1978) comprised Rush’s final large-scale work along these lines.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> One might also compare these with the similarly themed Pink Floyd song “Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun” (from *A Saucerful of Secrets*, 1968 and later live versions). David Bowie’s “Space Oddity” (1969) also involves an astronaut who fails to make it home. However, the tone is more psychedelic in those two songs (and even in *2001: A Space Odyssey*) than in “Cygnus X-1.”

<sup>55</sup> Osborne and Van Loon, *Introducing Sociology*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> *2112* and *A Farewell to Kings* also include less complex, less individualistic songs. The truth- and

### **“Hemispheres” (*Hemispheres*, 1978)**

The album *Hemispheres* begins with “Cygnus X-1 Book II Hemispheres” (a.k.a. “Hemispheres”), with which the band provided its last of only three album-side-length compositions. Among other things, the work balances the multi-sectional, extended form of “The Fountain of Lamneth” (1975) and “2112” (1976) with the expanded instrumental content (e.g., synthesizers and non-standard percussion) of the mini-epics “Xanadu” and “Cygnus X-1” (1977). As an experiment in moving beyond the individualist narratives of 1976-77, Peart establishes a conflict between the left (thought or “reason-oriented”) and right (emotion or “feelings-oriented”) halves of the human brain. He anthropomorphizes these according to classical/mythological references to the gods Apollo and Dionysus, respectively.<sup>57</sup> Peart reports that the psychology book *Powers of Mind* by Adam Smith a.k.a. G. J. W. Goodman (New York: Random House, 1975) inspired him to make these types of connections.<sup>58</sup> On the album cover, versions of Apollo (as a serious-looking, stiff, business-suited man, complete with bowler hat and walking stick) and Dionysus (as a naked, gesturing, “artsy”-looking figure) appear on either side of the rift between the two halves of a human brain. Hugh Syme, explains that he wished to represent Apollo as

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wisdom-oriented “A Farewell to Kings” opens that album, including a Minimoog synthesizer melody played by Geddy Lee. See Greg Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 58. The album also includes “Cinderella Man,” with lyrics by Lee based on Frank Capra’s 1936 rags-to-riches film *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (starring Gary Cooper and remade in 2002 with Adam Sandler). “Madrigal,” a kind of love song, features gentle, reflective music. “Closer to the Heart,” an anthem espousing diversity, especially appealed to female Rush fans, often appeared on album rock radio stations, and remained almost continuously in the band’s tour set-lists.

<sup>57</sup> “Cygnus X-1 Book II Hemispheres” refers to the fact that the final work on the previous album is entitled “Cygnus X-1 Book One—The Voyage” (“To be continued”).

<sup>58</sup> Bill Banasiewicz, *Rush Vision*, 39. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Rush featured film enhancements for live performances of some songs, including “Closer to the Heart,” “Cygnus X-1” (directed by Nick Prince), and “Hemispheres.”

a “severe, Magritte businessman” (left brain) and Dionysus as the opposite—a ballet dancer (right brain).<sup>59</sup> (See Table 3.4 for an overview of the work.)

**Table 3.4: Overview of “Hemispheres” (*Hemispheres*, 1978)**

Section	Form	Lyrics or Other Features	Tonality	
<b>I. Prelude</b>				
i	0:00	a	12/8 (some 9/8)	F# ext., some A/C/F, unison outl. G/F
ii	0:37	b	12/8	F#7-B, A-D
iii	0:59	c	3/4 then alternates w. 7/8, some 4/4	G/F#
iv	1:55	d	4/4	E major (via F and E min)
v	2:58	e	vocal: struggle, 4/4 (3rd p.)	b. on E maj, but w. F# maj
vi	3:20	f	vocal: battle, 7/4 (3rd p.)	E maj alt. w. D (4/4 ext. to A/C/F)
vii	3:36	b'	12/8	F#7-B, A/C/F, ends E maj
<b>II. Apollo—Bringer of Wisdom</b>				
i	4:29	c/c'	reason/truth (1st person plural), 7/8	G/F#, Bb/A
ii	5:22	a'	an “other” appears, 7/8 alt. w. 4/4	F#/A, F#/E
iii	5:38	e'	troubled “liberals,” 4/4 only (3rd p.)	E maj w. B/D (no F#: “unbalanced”)
iv	6:24	a''	guitar solo 1, 4/4	F#/A/B/F#/F
<b>III. Dionysus—Bringer of Love</b>				
i	7:00	c/c'	feelings/love (1st p.), 7/8	G/F#, Bb/A
ii	7:53	a'	an “other” appears, 7/8 alt. w. 4/4	F#/A, F#/E
iii	8:09	e'	troubled “hippies,” 4/4 only (3rd p.)	E maj w. B/D (no F#: “unbalanced”)
iv	8:55	a'''	abbreviated solo substitute	F#/A/C/F
<b>IV. Armageddon—The Battle of Heart and Mind</b>				
i	9:06	g	alternating 12/8 and some 9/8	B minor/D minor, A/C/F
ii	9:30	g'	guitar solo 2	B min/D min, A/C/F
iii	9:54	g''/b''	unguided humans, 12/8 (3rd p.)	B min/D min, A/C/F, F#-B
iv	10:21	g'''/b'''	aimless fighting, 12/8	B min/D min, A/C/F, F#-B
v	10:57	b''/h	the “others,” “Cygnus X-1” refs.	F#-B, ends C/F, ascent to C min
<b>V. Cygnus—Bringer of Balance</b>				
i	12:02	h'	additional “Cygnus X-1” refs.	ambiguous, ends in D maj
ii	12:45	i	Cygnus spirit speaks (1st p.), 4/4	based in D maj
iii	14:06	b'	Cygnus continues + thunder sounds	A/C/F, ends E maj (silent scream)
iv	14:37	f	battle section, 7/4	E maj alt. w. D maj
v	14:53	e	struggle section, gods “astonished”	b. on E maj, but w. F# maj
vi	15:24	e	guitar solo 3, on struggle chords	
vii	15:39	a'	Cygnus acknowledged/named	D/E (as in “battle”), G/B, F, F#/A
viii	16:02	b''''	12/8, joyous hard rock “dance”	F maj, A/C/F near end, closes w. G/A
<b>VI. The Sphere—A Kind of Dream</b>				
i	17:04	j	pursuing a different aim: balance	D maj w. A maj and F# maj,
	-18:04			A/C/F near end, but closes w. G/D

<sup>59</sup> Jeffrey Morgan, “From Brain Waves to Tidal Waves: The Story Behind Rush’s Album Covers,” *Creem*, 1983. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/creem83.html>.

Similar to the “Overture” of 2112, the “Prelude” (section 1) of *Hemispheres* initiates many of the work’s main musical themes in two instrumental segments (0:00-2:58 and 3:36-4:29). However, it also incorporates a vocal interlude concerning the struggle between the gods of love and reason for supremacy over the “fate of Man” (2:58-3:36, see Example 3.15).

**Example 3.15: “Prelude”/Vocal Interlude excerpt, “Hemispheres,” 2:58-3:23**

♩ = 128

E A F# D/F# C#dim/E Bm/D A/C#

When our weary world was young, the struggle of the An -

A E A F#

cients first be - gan. The Gods of Love and Rea - son

D/F# C#dim/E Bm/D A/C# A D

sought a - lone to rule the fate of Man.

No conventional tonal key signature can circumscribe this music.<sup>60</sup>

After the prelude, a pair of vocal stanzas introduces “Apollo—The Bringer of Wisdom” (section 2, 4:29-6:24, followed by Lifeson’s first guitar solo) and “Dionysus—The Bringer of Love” (section 3, 7:00-8:55), respectively. So as not to privilege either god ideologically, Rush gives both sides exactly the same music. Much of this musically

<sup>60</sup> The difficulty stems from the twice-held F# major chord in the guitar and the related cross-relations (A-naturals) involving Lee’s bass and, later, in his voice. The proceeding harmony moves chromatically through a series of weak (first inversion) chords on the words about Reason and Love competing. D major end up functioning as the subtonic of E mixolydian. The interlude ends with an ambiguous chord progression: F#, followed by the gesture A9, CM7, and FM7. The pattern cadences on E major, but additional solutions demonstrate its incompleteness (see also Table 3.4).

recalls elements from the prelude. Apollo mentions truth, understanding, wit, wisdom, precious gifts, awareness, food, shelter, fire, grace, and comfort. Dionysus (later, to the same music) mentions love, solace, feelings, laughter, music, joy, tears, and a soothing of fears. This invokes the values of the late-1960s counterculture, especially hippies. The band highlights the opening of these sections by using its favourite odd metrical constructions: 7/8 (2+2+3). The constant motion among adjacent-by-semitone extended chords (above G/F# and Bb/A) also underscore the instability of Apollo *and* Dionysus. Later in each section, in rhythm-and-blues-inspired 4/4 music, each god gently encourages the people to follow his particular social plan. After instrumental interruptions recalling the work's opening (F#-based), the following segments narrate (in third person) the frenetic activities of the warring and aimless people. In both cases, the people wonder what they lost by completely abandoning the other side, and Rush thereby voices its ambivalence about the teleological validity of *both* solutions.<sup>61</sup> The band follows section 2 (Apollo) with Lifeson's angry-sounding, bent pitch, heavy metal guitar solo on the same underlying 4/4 music. An F#/A/C/F gesture at the end of section 3 (Dionysus) thematically recalls gestures from the prelude.

Section 4, "Armageddon—The Battle of Heart and Mind" (9:06-12:02), contextualises the A/C/F gesture according to B minor and D minor (not E major). This section inscribes human chaos about how best to run society. The first segment (9:06-10:57, including Lifeson's second guitar solo) uses harmonically unstable motions, such as tritones and chromaticism. During this section, the recording pans both Lifeson's solo and, later, Geddy Lee's high voice from a normative centre placement to extreme left and

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<sup>61</sup> This recalls Susan McClary's discussion of Madonna's rejection of the virgin/whore dichotomy by refusing to privileging one tonality over another in her 1989 song "Like a Prayer." See McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991), 155.

right “divisions.” It also eventually recalls previously unrepeated, 12/8 music from early in the prelude. The section’s joyous, final 4/4 segment (10:57-12:02, initiated by a drum fill) musically and lyrically evokes a third stream—people who went their own way instead of following Apollo *or* Dionysus. To musically parallel this ideological contrast, the band features highly tonal (V-I) cadential motions. The point of view shifts to the astronaut from “Cygnus X-1 Book 1—The Voyage,” the last work on the band’s immediately preceding album. He explains that he spiralled, with his ship the *Rocinante*, into the timeless space of the black hole Cygnus X-1 and *did not die*. At that point, the band reprises the multiple semitone, unison ascent (ending on C minor) that it featured both instrumentally and vocally (as the black hole takes control) in the earlier work.<sup>62</sup> Peart invents a new mythology, one in which the earlier work’s astronaut (arguably, a kind of “martyr” for individualism) precipitates the later work’s third stream social misfits (libertarians?).

Section 6, “Cygnus—Bringer of Balance” (beginning at 12:02), initially reprises the unusual chords from the end of “Cygnus X-1.” Synthesizer sounds as well as subdued “samples” from the earlier work, panned stereophonically, also take part.<sup>63</sup> In this section of “Hemispheres,” a “disembodied spirit” (later named Cygnus) first begins

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<sup>62</sup> See the end of Example 3.11.

<sup>63</sup> See Example 3.14. Geddy Lee wrote this part of “Hemispheres” on an Oberheim eight-voice polyphonic synthesizer, and Terry Watkinson (the keyboardist of Canadian Rush colleagues Max Webster) gave him some keyboard pointers. Greg Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 60. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/kybd0984.html>.

On this song, Lee plays his 1972 Rickenbacker 4001 bass. On tour in the late 1970s, he normally ran his basses through an Ampeg amplifier and cabinets (with new JBL speakers). He ran his doubleneck Rickenbacker basses through a Fender Twin Reverb amplifier. In 1978, he added Ashley pre-amps, BGW power amps, and Thiele Design cabinets with JBL speakers. Live shows included the Oberheim as well as the Moog Taurus pedals and Minimoog synthesizer Lee began to play in 1976-77. See Perry Stern, interview with Lee, “Rush: real life in a rock & roll band,” *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988.

As with *A Farewell to Kings* (1977), Rush recorded *Hemispheres* at Rockfield Studios in Wales, co-producing it with Terry Brown, but this time the band mixed the album at London’s Trident Studio.

to speak (12:45-14:37). Lee sets the words “I have memory and awareness, but I have no shape or form . . .” in a almost chant-like natural baritone chest voice. Lifeson’s chorused guitar effects further the disembodiment. The texture remains quite thin and the tempo slow, featuring an uncharacteristic rubato. Studio techniques, especially echo, also participate. These evoke the vaguely mechanical/mystical electronic sounds that open the futuristic cityscape of Ridley Scott’s later science-fiction film *Blade Runner* (1982). Lee sings about a “silent scream” building inside.

The music then explodes into a reprise of earlier music, and Lee sings very high notes again.<sup>64</sup> In the vocal interlude of the work’s prelude, *struggle* music (even-eighth-notes in 4/4, **e** in Table 3.4) precedes *battle* music (in 7/4, **f** in Table 3.4). This time the band switches these segments (at 14:37-14:53 and 14:53-15:24). This suggests the inevitability of ideological battles—but also that true individuals still have to find their own way. The gods express their astonishment at the emerging entity’s eerie calm vis-à-vis humanity’s “sorry hemispheres.” The inclusion of F# recalls its earlier role as the dominant of B in section 4 (“Armageddon”), where we first meet the third stream. An extended chord on that pitch also earlier interrupted the Apollo and Dionysus sections. At this point, however, the two competing gods welcome him (and his F#) as a fellow immortal: “Cygnus—the God of Balance” (see Example 3.16).

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<sup>64</sup> Lee said: “[“Hemispheres”] was written in a very difficult key for me to sing. If I sang low, I didn’t have any power, so I had to sing way up high, and it’s difficult to do.” Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 63.



**Example 3.16: “Cygnus—Bringer of Balance,” “Hemispheres,” 15:46-16:03**

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass clef). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 120.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with the lyrics "We will call you Cyg - nus. The God of". The first measure has a G major chord above it. The second measure has a B major chord with an added C# (B(add C#)) above it.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with the lyrics "Balance you shall be." The first measure has an F major chord above it. The second measure has an F#7 chord with an added B (F#7 (add B)) above it. The piano accompaniment in this system features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes.

**System 3:** The piano accompaniment continues with chords labeled A (add B) and F. The bass line features a descending eighth-note pattern.

F#/Cygnus functions tonally as a mediant balance between A and D. Lifeson’s third guitar solo (15:24-15:39) also heightens this. A joyously rollicking, 12/8 hard rock “dance” in F major (16:02-17:04) follows this. It ends on a long-deferred A major cadence (a tonality rarely used earlier). The band approaches this via the extended A major, C major, and F major chords that we have come to expect as the work’s recurring

turning point. However, the other statements of this cadential figure move to a tonal centre other than A major (see Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5: Solutions to the “Hemispheres” Cadential Figure**

**A (add B)—C maj 7—F maj 7:**

-beginning of the Prelude (section 1)	B major (via F#7)
-at the end of section 1	E major (by semitone)
-between Apollo/Dionysus (sections 2-3) and Armageddon (section 4)	B minor (by tritone leap)
-within section 4	B major (via F#7)
-at the end of section 4	C minor (via G/E $\flat$ major)
-within Cygnus (section 5)	E major (by semitone)
-at the end of section 5	A major (via G major)
-at the end of “The Sphere” (section 6)	D major (also via G major)

The band emphasizes the unusual ending of the end of section 5 through a sustained hard rock flourish, including a gong-like sound.

Section 6, “The Sphere—A Kind of Dream” (17:04-18:04), inscribes a tonality of D major. However, the band places an F# chord in the middle of the section, just after lyrics about pursuing a “different aim.” The work ends on a D major chord, approached by the same chords as the previous section (A, C, F, and G). As with A major at the end of the previous section, no earlier section of the work ends in D major, especially not after the A/C/F gesture. The proximity of these two concluding sections, ending on A and D but both with prominent F# chords, suggests that Cygnus has balanced and enriched both Apollo/Reason and Dionysus/Love. The section also features a clean-timbred guitar sound, Lee’s normal/lower countertenor, and a warm keyboard countermelody. It has no distorted electric guitar, no bass guitar, and no drums. It provide a safe, normative folk-rock sound, something like Harry Chapin or James Taylor. The lyrics call for “truth [and] sensibility, armed with sense and liberty, with the Heart

and Mind united in a single perfect sphere.” As drummer-lyricist Neil Peart says of this work: “It’s not some abstract cosmic battle[. I]t’s part of our everyday personal lives.”<sup>65</sup> According to anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (as paraphrased by Richard Middleton), “myth is a structured system of signifiers, whose internal networks of relationships are used to ‘map’ the structure of other sets of relationships; the ‘content’ is infinitely variable and relatively unimportant.”<sup>66</sup> In “Hemispheres,” Rush mythologized the post-counterculture in rock music.

The 3-5-1 motion A-C-F inscribes the opening intervallic gesture of the Canadian national anthem, “O Canada.” The nation boasted a politically liberal and ideologically libertarian Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919-2000), during the post-counterculture (1968-84). Despite difficult, controversial decisions, Trudeau maintained his federalist vision for a strong, officially bilingual, individualism-enabling, and multicultural Canada. This also relates to the ideological viewpoint of Rush’s “The Trees,” one of two short songs on the second half of *Hemispheres*. Trudeau’s famous aphorism “La raison avant la passion” (“Reason before passion”) serves as an apt summary of Rush’s ideological approach in “Hemispheres” and other works. Trudeau persevered under adversity and often publicly demonstrated his eccentric personal views and conflicted ideology, and millions of people born in the first three decades after World War II (including non-Canadians) saw Trudeau as a flawed but necessary hero during a difficult cultural moment. Many rock fans interpreted Rush’s music and lyrics in the

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<sup>65</sup> Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 39.

<sup>66</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 222. Middleton goes on to demonstrate that the political, U.K. ska-revival band the Specials uses the same music to introduce two very different sections of “Ghost Town” (1981). This serves to “‘reconcile’ them, locating them in the same ‘mythic’ time-frame” (223). Rush does something similar, but it first equates two ostensibly different frames as inadequate and then adds an additional frame that *itself* becomes the reconciliation.

same way in the 1970s and '80s. As bassist-singer Geddy Lee said, Rush poses “interesting problems for people to think about.”<sup>67</sup>

### “The Trees” (*Hemispheres*, 1978)

Joseph Kerman defines ideology as: “a fairly coherent set of ideas brought together not for strictly intellectual purposes but in the service of some strongly held communal belief.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, ideology and myth-making closely parallel one another. Rush’s ideology involves individualism, forging a professional and/or personal identity, and not allowing outside forces to control one’s activities and path. “The Trees,” the third song on *Hemispheres*, inscribes a pointed criticism of legislated equality (artificial “balance”).<sup>69</sup> Its lyrics present an allegory depicting one group of trees, the Maples, as being oppressed by another group of trees, the more lofty Oaks. The maple leaf functions as Canada’s most important national symbol; thus, one might interpret the Maples in this song as Canada and the Oaks as the United States.<sup>70</sup> This makes sense at an initial level of inquiry, but Rush does not seem to argue for the Oaks as monologic. (Mikhail Bakhtin defines a monologic world view as one that “denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities . . . finalized and deaf to the

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<sup>67</sup> Greg Quill, article-interview with Lee, “Geddy Lee/Rush,” *Canadian Composer*, May 1981, 28.

<sup>68</sup> Joseph Kerman, “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out” in *Write All These Down* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1994 ), 15. Originally presented in 1978-79 and published in 1981.

<sup>69</sup> “Circumstances,” a hard rock anthem not unlike 2112’s “Something for Nothing,” opens the second half of *Hemispheres*. It deals with youthful naïveté transforming into adult idealism.

<sup>70</sup> Others have argued that “The Trees” refers to Quebec’s position as a distinct society within Canada. However, a Canada/U.S. interpretation initially makes more sense.

other's response."<sup>71</sup>) However, this song arguably criticizes the main *Canadian* initiative intended to correct U.S. media hegemony.

In 1971, Canada introduced cultural content regulations in the form of broadcasting quotas set at 30% Canadian content ("CanCon"). A "Canadian" recording features a majority of the following: music and/or lyrics written by a Canadian, a performance mainly by Canadians, and recording sessions in Canada.<sup>72</sup> Rush's aggressive touring and stylistically varied album catalogue (1974-2003) ensured its continuing success in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada despite any such regulations.<sup>73</sup> In "The Trees," the Maples form a union, and at the end of the song an outside force cuts the Oaks down to the height of the Maples. The closing lyrics of the song—"and the trees

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<sup>71</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 32, 292-93; quoted in Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>72</sup> In 1991, an album by Bryan Adams notoriously failed to qualify. Simon Frith also discusses the problematic "musicological" approaches of the Canadian and U.K. governments towards genre definitions. See Frith, "Genre Rules," *Performing Rites*, 79-84. Rock musicians successful mainly in Canada and partly because of "CanCon" regulations included April Wine, Blue Rodeo, Chilliwack, Bruce Cockburn, Sass Jordan, Payola\$, Prism, Red Rider, Rough Trade, Saga, the Tragically Hip, Triumph, and Trooper. I also recall a dance pop band called Kon Kan (a play on words on "CanCon"). These artists had relatively modest levels of success, if any, in the United States.

<sup>73</sup> Canadians with Top 40 successes in the U.S. included Bryan Adams, Paul Anka, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, the Barenaked Ladies, Céline Dion, the Guess Who, k.d. lang, Gordon Lightfoot, Loverboy, Sarah McLachlan, Joni Mitchell, Alanis Morissette, Anne Murray, Shania Twain, and Neil Young. These artists covered pop, rock, country/pop, and folk/pop. Many of them became expatriates.

U.S. artists Ted Nugent, ZZ Top, Foghat, Blue Öyster Cult, Styx, Aerosmith, Lynyrd Skynyrd, KISS, the U.K. band Uriah Heep, the Scottish band Nazareth, and the Irish band Thin Lizzy all included Rush as an opening act at least once during its early (1973-77) professional career. Additional early professional Rush gigs included opening sets for the New York Dolls, Rory Gallagher, Hawkwind, Billy Preston, the Marshall Tucker Band, and Manfred Mann.

Opening acts *for* Rush in the late-1970s included U.S. hard rock artists Angel (KISS-influenced), Tommy Bolin, Cheap Trick, the Runaways (all-female, including future stars Lita Ford and Joan Jett), Starcastle (Yes-influenced), and Starz; former Rush headliners Blue Öyster Cult and Styx (both from the U.S.); U.S. artists Blondie, Rick Derringer, Kansas, Molly Hatchet, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and Toto; Canadian artists April Wine, Chilliwack, Max Webster, the Pat Travers Band, and Streetheart; U.K. artists the Babys (including future Journey and Bad English members), T. Rex, the Tyla Gang, UFO, former Rush headliner Uriah Heep, and Dutch band Golden Earring.

are all kept equal by hatchet, axe, and saw”—make it quite clear that Rush (or at least lyricist Neil Peart) considers the solution inappropriate. This may reflect the band’s cynicism about Canadian content regulations, but ironic inscriptions of artificial balance also appear within the song’s music.

“The Trees” demonstrates the compact approach that Rush used while also continuing with certain extended works between 1975 and 1981. With a duration of less than five minutes, the song succinctly distributes vocal and instrumental passages (28% to 72%), nearly balances unison and contrapuntal instrumental sections (13% to 15%), uses a wide variety of metres (including 28% asymmetrical), includes synthesizer material 24% of the time, and varies widely in dynamics. It begins with Lifeson’s 6/8 classical guitar introduction (0:00-0:10, included as “acoustic guitar” in the song chart), after which Lee joins on bass and vocals as the same music underlies the first verse (the A section, 0:10-0:22).<sup>74</sup> Lee sings in his natural baritone register and provides a comparatively simple bass part. The music moves between B minor and its relative major, D, but the G#s in C# and E chords also suggest D lydian. As Lee sings about the “unrest” of the Maples’ discontent, he balances the vocal line by stressing the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> then 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> beats of the 6/8 unit (see Example 3.17).

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<sup>74</sup> On the band’s 1981 live album, *Exit...Stage Left*, Lifeson precedes this song with a brief, classical guitar etude, “Broon’s Bane,” named after the band’s co-producer Terry “Broon” Brown. Lifeson discusses such a piece in Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980. (He also mentions some of his favourite classical guitarists and lutenists: Segovia, Williams, Bream, de Lucia, Parkening, Boyd, and Montoya. In the early 1970s, Lifeson took classical guitar lessons with former Eli Kassner student Elliot Goldner.) “Broon’s Bane” seems modelled after Cuban composer Leo Brouwer’s guitar etude, “Afro-Cuban Lullaby,” which Steve Hackett performed (uncredited) as “Horizon’s” on *Foxtrot* (1972) by the U.K. band Genesis. Thanks to Jay Hodgson for this information.

**Example 3.17: Verse 1 of “The Trees,” 0:11-0:22**

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 6/8 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 78. The lyrics are: "There is un - rest in the for - est; there is trou - ble with the trees, for the Ma - ples want more sun - light and the Oaks ig - nore their pleas." The chords are: Bmin, D, F#(no3rd), C#min, A(no3rd), E, G, Bmin.

Similar to the water sounds in “2112” and the various nature sounds in “Xanadu,” the bird sounds that follow this reinforce the imagery of a “state of nature” in which the Oaks ignore the Maples’ pleas. As Lee sings “Oaks ignore their pleas” in the last phrase, he shifts the emphasis to the first and third beats, which depicts the Oaks taunting, or laughing at, the childish Maples. This long-short-long-short “taunting gesture” recalls similar ones in “Working Man” and “Anthem.” In any case, Verse 1 tonally and rhythmically inscribes a precarious balance, and Lifeson and Lee reinforce this by repeating this music instrumentally and with Lee compensating for the lack of vocals by contributing a rather more active bass guitar part (0:22-0:34). A brief guitar/bass interlude (0:34-0:40) then summarizes the balance between D and B, but shifting the time signature to 3/4 instead of 6/8 and thereby increasing the rate of the basic pulse by one-third and providing what might have functioned as a subtle bridge into the next section.

Jarringly, though, the following section (B) presents a number of extreme tonal and metrical shifts. For example, the band retains the tempo of the previous 3/4 interlude, but now shifting the time signature to 4/4, introducing a pair of unresolved

“secondary dominants” (V/B and V/D), Lifeson shifting to heavy, strummed, rhythmically regular power chords, and Peart entering vigorously on drums (0:40-0:47). As Lee begins singing Verse 2 (about the Oaks being too lofty, 0:47-1:15), he switches to his piercing countertenor voice—an octave and a half above the range in which he has just been singing. Agitated, highly syncopated note entries remove all traces of the much more pastoral tone presented in the A section, thus providing an urgency not dissipated until the very end of the song (see Example 3.18).

**Example 3.18: Verse 2 of “The Trees” (first half), 0:40-1:00**

♩ = 156

F# (even 8ths) G (even 8ths)

The trouble with the Ma - ples (and they're  
quite con- vinced they're right): they say the Oaks are just too loft -  
y and they grab up all the light.

Although the song’s homophonic texture continues into the new, hard rock orchestration, this section also sets up contrasting tonal areas. This music outlines A major, but also contains a series of adjacent major chords. This parallels the ongoing differentiation between the neighbouring Maples and Oaks, but in a heightened, argumentative sense that temporarily displaces their original identities (D major and B minor). After a brief



interlude (1:15-1:21), the second A section (Verse 3, 1:21-1:45, D/B, 6/8) retains the heavy instrumentation and high vocals of the B section. Thus, it stylistically bridges the two preceding sections, and by now the “creatures all have fled,” perhaps frightened away by the Maples’ screams of “oppression.”<sup>75</sup>

The shift to 4/4 after Verse 3 (the hard rock A section) establishes not the B section, but rather an extended instrumental section that initially features a plaintive, woodwind-like synthesizer solo (1:45-2:17) beginning in A major (quite diatonically) and ending at A’s dominant, E major. Lifeson and Peart respectively play quiet, angular, electric guitar figurations and rhythmic, wood block drum sounds. These evoke hammering woodpeckers, which prove insufficient for the task of equalizing the two groups of trees. A passage in 5/4 shifts the harmony back to B (2:17-2:53) and soon becomes louder and quite rhythmic (2:53-3:10). Lee plays bass rhythms highly reminiscent of the rhythms he *sang* in Verse 1 (the A section), and this section further merges the A and B sections by focusing on B minor, D major, and A major, and it also includes Lifeson’s guitar solo (3:10-3:29) over the continuing 5/4 material. A passage in 6/8 then further recalls the formerly sung rhythms (3:29-3:49), with the band also musically expanding the song’s precarious balancing act by interrupting with brief, ascending (A-based) vs. descending (D-based) scalar passages in the bass vs. guitar, both in rhythmic unison with Peart’s woodpecker wood block sounds.<sup>76</sup> These passages produce something like “stop-time” effects (by briefly highlighting certain instruments), and they also parallel the tonal areas of the B and A sections in very close proximity, thus

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<sup>75</sup> In addition, Lifeson voices the F# chords as barred, major power chords, thus extending the secondary dominant of B into the new, hard rock version of the A section (Verse 3).

<sup>76</sup> It bases this distinctive and virtuosic section on G major and F# minor chords, with very prominent thirds. G major normally functions as “flat-7” in the pivot to A major in the B section.

inscribing a heated, contrapuntal volley of arguments. It then returns to the earlier 5/4 riff (3:49-3:58) but now with F# major chords in order to contrast the 3/4 pivot to the B section that this elaborate instrumental section already expanded and enriched.

After the instrumental section, a second B section (Verse 4) outlines the Maples forming a union and “demanding equal rights” (3:58-4:28). At the end of this verse, Lee sings equal quarters on the words “trees are all kept equal” (4:20-4:23, on F#s). As this represents the only time he does so in the entire song, this underscores the fact that an external agent provided the “equality.” The vocal melody, bass, and guitar then follow this with an ascent from F# through A, but instead of cycling back to 6/8, D major, and the A section the song ends abruptly—though ambiguously—on A major, with quiet bird calls recalling the song’s opening sections. Peart strikes his wind chimes (4:28-4:42), but the fading pitches (G#, C#, and B) present an ominous effect, encouraging us to mock the song’s socio-political “accomplishment.”

The alternate time signatures, tonal juxtapositions, and contrary motions of the song’s instrumental section suggest a kind of “Royal Commission.” In Canada, such a publicly funded inquiry (or deliberation) normally concerns such thorny issues as language laws, the misappropriation of public funds, and the sale of publicly owned companies. In the middle section of “The Trees,” Rush similarly presents material in ways not adequately argued elsewhere. One could thus interpret the eventual narrative solution of this song—legislated equality—as critical of Canadian Content regulations as a variant of affirmative action.<sup>77</sup> In any case, the entire song achieves a kind of “critical mass” in its obsession with balance and equality. It provides aural and intellectual

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<sup>77</sup> Despite its importance to the meaning of the song, *Rush Complete—Vol. 1* (Core Music Publishing, 1986) excludes the *entire* instrumental section. This parallels the same publication’s exclusion of the instrumental introductions of “Anthem,” “Xanadu,” and “Cygnus X-1.” Later publications of “off-the-record” transcriptions corrected this for a few Rush songs.

meaning because it “works through” its contradictory rhythms, tonalities, and textures instead of merely presenting them. Neil Peart later downplayed the song’s meaning:

It was just a flash. I was working on an entirely different thing when I saw a cartoon picture of these trees carrying on like fools. I thought, “What if trees acted like people?” So I saw it as a cartoon really, and wrote it that way. I think that’s the image that it conjures up to a listener or a reader. A very simple statement.<sup>78</sup>

Nonetheless, I hope to have provided a reasonable interpretation of its meaning.

### **“La Villa Strangiato” (*Hemispheres*, 1978)**

Rush often intersperses its main vocal sections with extensive instrumental passages comprising different music, such as introductions, transitions, transformations, virtuosic interplays, “middle sections,” and guitar solos. “Xanadu” and “Cygnus X-1” (11:08 and 10:22, 1977) both feature five-minute instrumental introductions before the vocals enter, and the latter has sung vocals present only 16% of the time.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Rush inevitably composed some entirely instrumental narratives, which as a “side effect” also provided a fairly direct method for moderating the band’s lyrics. On the other hand, “La Villa Strangiato,” the closing “epic instrumental” work of *Hemispheres*, comes complete with elaborate section headings as well the caveat “An exercise in Self-Indulgence” (see Table 3.6). Part of the indulgence involves Lifeson sometimes playing Moog Taurus pedals along with his ever-present guitars (including classical guitar for the work’s

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<sup>78</sup> Cheech Iero, article-interview with Neil Peart, *Modern Drummer*, April/May 1980. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0480.html>.

<sup>79</sup> “Cygnus X-1” includes a brief spoken passage by Terry Brown (Rush’s U.K.-born co-producer) near the beginning of its Prologue, but Lee does not sing anything until 5:02.

As a teenager in the late 1960s, Geddy Lee first played guitar and then bass guitar. All three band members repeatedly demonstrated their interest in devising elaborate instrumental sections, and drummer Neil Peart and guitarist Alex Lifeson do not really sing.

opening 5%).<sup>80</sup> Synthesized elements appear for about half of the work, and nearly a third of it makes use of asymmetrical metres.

**Table 3.6: Overview of “La Villa Strangiato” (*Hemispheres*, 1978)**  
Based on the lyrics sheet liner notes, timings added for section divisions

La Villa Strangiato  
(An exercise in Self-Indulgence)  
Including  
I — Buenos Nochas, Mein Froinds! [0:00-0:26]  
II — To sleep, perchance to dream... [0:26-2:00]  
III — Strangiato theme [2:00-3:16]  
IV — A Lerxst in Wonderland [3:16-5:49]  
V — Monsters! [5:49-6:10]  
VI — The Ghost of the Aragon [6:10-6:46]  
VII — Danforth and Pape [6:46-7:27]  
VIII — The Waltz of the Shreves [7:27-7:53]  
IX — Never turn your back on a Monster! [7:53-8:04]  
X — Monsters! (Reprise) [8:04-8:18]  
XI — Strangiato theme (Reprise) [8:18-9:22]  
XII — A Farewell to Things [9:22-9:34]

The title “La Villa Strangiato” intentionally conflates bad French with bad Spanish and supposedly means “The Strange City.” The title of section 1 (“Buenos Nochas, Mein Froinds!”) also combines two languages, this time bad Spanish with bad German or Yiddish.<sup>81</sup> Section 2 invokes Hamlet’s soliloquy in Shakespeare’s play, and “Lerxst” (section 4) references Lifeson’s “band nickname.”<sup>82</sup> The titles of the two middle sections mention actual places: “Aragon” (section 6) may refer to Chicago’s Aragon Ballroom, an

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<sup>80</sup> Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980. In other songs, generally only Lee plays pedals.

<sup>81</sup> Geddy Lee (b. Gary Lee Weinrib) and Alex Lifeson (transliterated from Zivojinovich) are of European descent, Lee’s parents from Poland and Lifeson’s from Yugoslavia. Yiddish may have been part of the recent family histories of the Weinrib and/or Zivojinovich families. Lifeson’s father worked in mines in British Columbia until he became injured around 1955 (when Alex was two) and the family moved across the country, ending up in a non-English speaking neighbourhood in Toronto. See Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980.

<sup>82</sup> The band’s first live album title, *All the World’s a Stage* (1976), also references Shakespeare.

extravagant jazz era theatre opened in 1926 and a frequent late-1970s Rush venue, and “Danforth and Pape” (section 7) refers to a Greek neighbourhood northeast of downtown Toronto.<sup>83</sup> The concluding “A Farewell to Things” (section 12) references Rush’s 1977 album title song “A Farewell to Kings.”

Lifeson bases his simple, opening classical guitar gesture on the melody of “Gute Nacht, Freunde,” by A. Yondrascheck. Broken D# diminished chords, slightly elaborated the third time, resolve on strummed E chords (0:00-0:21). This may relate to the Yiddish/German part of the section’s title. Lifeson explains: “[T]he compositional foundation for [“La Villa Strangiato”] is taken from weird dreams I often had. Each of the separate musical themes is based on individual dreams.”<sup>84</sup> Section 1’s title and Yondrascheck’s gentle tune both evoke a lullaby or “night prayers.” Thus, the work’s opening may relate to a childhood dream, or later childlike dream, experienced by Lifeson. He follows this with an extremely fast, flamenco-like passage, descending from the pitch E (above middle C) down almost two octaves to the root of an F major chord (0:21-0:26). This evokes the Spanish part of section 1’s title, but it also suggests falling into sleep or, perhaps, into a more intense dream.<sup>85</sup>

Section 2 (0:26-2:00, in 4/4) grows from a lullaby-like C major 9<sup>th</sup> chord. This includes a repeated, descending, C/G ostinato fourth “lulling” in its upper register. The section slowly becomes louder and more active, including bell, synthesizer, and,

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<sup>83</sup> The Aragon section may also refer to Henry VIII’s first wife, Catharine of Aragon (of Spanish ancestry), whose “failure” to bear Henry a male heir precipitated the sixteenth-century English Reformation. As with Catharine of Aragon bringing “Spain” into English culture, “La Villa Strangiato” brings Spanish musical elements into Rush’s largely English-inspired, progressive hard rock style.

<sup>84</sup> Paraphrased in Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 39.

<sup>85</sup> Lifeson points out in an interview that he was not fast enough to play in flamenco style without a pick, so he “cheated.” See Schwartz, “Rush’s Kinetic Lead Guitarist,” *Guitar Player*, June 1980.

eventually, bass guitar gestures and ever more intricate drum patterns. These elements evoke a “text-orientated style [that] builds up (often incomplete or ambiguous) codes from a repertory of (undercoded) texts.”<sup>86</sup> This part of the dream remains, in fact, incomplete and ambiguous.<sup>87</sup> Suddenly, the “Strangiato theme” (section 3, 2:00-3:16, in 4/4) interrupts the ambiguous dream, in a more overcoded, “grammar-orientated” style. This features much more clearly delineated sections, involving gentle syncopations alternating with frenetic descents.<sup>88</sup> The second half of the work’s main theme includes a brief angular passage (2:25-2:38 and 2:57-3:10) that oscillates (tritonally) between C and F# chords. The band follows the second such passage with a “coda” (3:10-3:16) that comprises a four-measure restatement of the earlier, frenetic, descending guitar gesture. However, section 4 suddenly aborts this.

Section 4, “A Leroxst in Wonderland” (3:16-5:49), slows down the rhythmic activity but switches the time signature to 7/4. It also alternates the pitch level between A major and its flat-6 (F major). This relationship traditionally encodes “illusory hope” (as it does in earlier Rush songs), and thus it may here suggest the impossibility of escaping from “Wonderland.”<sup>89</sup> Lifeson/Leroxst plays an emotive, bluesy guitar solo (3:39-5:14) over these continuing changes and features slow-delay note-attacks in which he uses the guitar’s volume control to introduce pitches hesitantly and “unnaturally.” The continuing A mode flat-6 motions and the note-delays combine to give this section a disembodied,

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<sup>86</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 173.

<sup>87</sup> See also Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Specifically, it establishes solidly voiced, but syncopated, hard rock C major chords that slip, after several measures, down to A mixolydian, with frenetic, descending guitar passages in the latter half of each measure, offset by IV and syncopated V chords every several measures.

<sup>89</sup> See McClary, “Pitches, Expression, Ideology,” *Enclitic*, Spring 1983, 76-86.

dream-like quality. This falls somewhere between the undercoding of the earlier dream section and the overcoding of the main theme’s various elements (section 3). After the hesitancy and occasionally abrupt flourishes of the solo, the section builds in its final measures (5:14-5:49, thereby recalling section 2’s accretionary dream effects) and increases in dynamics as though the dream begins to approach its most intense phase.<sup>90</sup>

Rush based the melody of section 5, “Monsters!” (5:49-6:10), on the main tune of the second section of “Powerhouse” (1937) by the U.S. bandleader Raymond Scott (1908-1994). This eventually got Rush in some legal trouble, but the parties resolved it out of court.<sup>91</sup> The tune would have been familiar to the members of Rush through its frequent use as “mechanical music” in 1950s’ Warner Bros. cartoons. For example, one such cartoon uses this music (with its characteristic tritone, see Example 3.19) for a conveyor belt assembly line of hens laying eggs.

**Example 3.19: Excerpt from the main tune of the second part of “Powerhouse,” by Raymond Scott (1937)<sup>92</sup>**

*(The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights & Turkish Twilights, Columbia/Legacy, 1992; transcribed by Bowman)*



Rush initially alters Scott’s tune to conform to the band’s characteristic 7/8. However, the band then reverts to the original’s 4/4 and combines it with guitar trills on the ending note, a related bass line, a frenetic cadential gesture, and alternate ending pitches. This provides an unsettling effect, as in the most intense phase of R.E.M. (Rapid Eye

<sup>90</sup> The music reverts to C major ninth gestures, but on even eighth-notes in 7/4 and with F continuing in the bass. These alternate with A minor chords, but retaining the added Ds.

<sup>91</sup> Thanks to Daniel Goldmark for this information.

<sup>92</sup> The E-natural versus E♭ in the transcription is correct.

Movement) sleep. The physical effects of R.E.M. sleep thus similarly overcode this section of “La Villa Strangiato.”<sup>93</sup> In this section, Lifeson and Lee also use the technique of “palm-muting.” Specifically, they force the melody’s opening three notes *not* to resonate. This parallels the staccato delivery of these same notes in Scott’s equally eccentric original (see Example 3.20).

**Example 3.20: Rush’s Versions of “Powerhouse” in “Monsters!”  
from “La Villa Strangiato,” 5:49-6:10**

The musical score for Example 3.20 is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = ca 120. The first system consists of two staves in 7/8 time, with a first ending marked '4 times total' and a second ending marked '3 times total'. The second system continues in 7/8 time, featuring a triplet in the upper staff and a trill (tr) in the lower staff. The third system is in 4/4 time, with a first ending marked '3 times total' and a trill (tr) in the upper staff. The score includes various rhythmic notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The frenetic effects here contribute to the short-lived, intense images of R.E.M. sleep.

Section 6, “The Ghost of the Aragon” (6:10-6:46, in 4/4), retains the feverish aesthetic of “Monsters!” It begins with a brief, virtuosic bass solo that rises, partly via A/E♭ tritones, in its first measure. It then descends in its second measure. (These

<sup>93</sup> During R.E.M. sleep, heart/respiration rates elevate and vary, blood pressure/flow increases, brain activity heightens, one may feel “trapped,” and the eyes move rapidly under the eyelids. See <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=117529&tocid=38762&query=rem>.



features establish the solo as relatively overcoded.) The section continues with highly syncopated open chords that chromatically descend by an octave (A to A) over two measures. Then, the texture becomes increasingly spotty and “guttural.” (These suggest relative undercoding.) The section ends suddenly on a V/I perfect cadence that implies an impending return to the A major of the main Strangiato theme. However, the band first works through some additional material and reprises.

A brief drum solo leads into section 7 (“Danforth and Pape,” 6:46-7:27). Here, the band plays quite chromatically. In particular, Lifeson plays a hard rock guitar solo over highly syncopated, “staggered” C/F# changes that incorporate extended chords. Section 8 (“The Waltz of the Shreves,” 7:27-7:53) features triple-metre (hence “waltz”), largely unison passages. As the band begins to shift into relative overcoding, section 9 (“Never Turn Your Back On a Monster,” 7:53-8:04) comprises a brief, bluesy, 6/8 version of the bass pattern from the earlier “Monsters!” section. Section 10 (“Monsters! Reprise,” 8:04-8:18) reprises the 4/4 part of “Monsters!” itself. As its title suggests, the “Strangiato theme (Reprise)” (section 11, 8:18-9:22), reprises the work’s main theme. At the beginning of section 12 (“A Farewell to Things,” 9:21-9:34), the band reprises the 7/8 part of “Monsters!” section, as well as the chromatic A to A descent from section 6 and a final, single-measure, ascending-then-descending bass solo that recalls the beginning of section 6. The work ends abruptly on a staccato C major chord, as though suddenly awakening from a dream.<sup>94</sup>

“La Villa Strangiato” achieves its indulgent and musicianly effects through an ebbing and flowing between comparatively overcoded and undercoded elements. Geddy Lee says that Rush: “wanted to put together a very complex song that had a lot of

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<sup>94</sup> This also suggests that the frequent appearances of A (minor *or* major) and F# chords (as well as the less frequent appearances of F, D, and G, and even B and E) all inflected C major.

different time changes and had a lot of really radical changes in mood and rhythm.”<sup>95</sup>

David Brackett, basing his analysis on the work of Richard Middleton, discusses such alternating structures as “discursive . . . characterized by repetition of contrasting phrases, ‘narrative’ harmonic sequences, a teleological orientation . . . more typical of European popular and traditional forms.”<sup>96</sup> The sectionalized, discursive, and syntagmatic nature of this work suggests that Rush wished to construct a comparatively left-brain (rational, logical) activity. Thus, the work also relates more to Apollo (of the album’s opening work “Hemispheres”) than to extended/Dionysian, blues-rock jamming.<sup>97</sup> In other words, it contrasts with holistic, musematic (riff-based), and paradigmatic music.

### **Pursuing Different Aims**

David Brackett devotes a chapter to Elvis Costello, referring to the artist’s:

tension between calculation and spontaneity characteriz[ing] the music produced by Costello and others who occupy a somewhat marginal place in the popular music industry . . . present[ing] themselves as different enough to attract attention for their uniqueness; at the same time . . . need[ing] to remain similar enough to provide a sense of familiarity.<sup>98</sup>

Rush also occupies a “somewhat marginal place in the popular music industry” and similarly balanced uniqueness with familiarity. Brackett earlier points out:

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<sup>95</sup> The band recorded “La Villa Strangiato” in one take, but after composing the sections separately, assembling them into a coherent whole, learning to play them in order, and rehearsing the work about forty times. See Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 38. In his dissertation on Metallica (UCLA, 2003), Glenn Pillsbury refers to this manner of assembling pre-composed instrumental sections into larger works as “modular composition.”

<sup>96</sup> Brackett, *Interpreting Popular*, 118. In the following pages of his chapter on James Brown, Brackett also discusses U.S. writer Henry Louis Gates’ theories concerning African-American tropes, all of which Rush definitely avoids in “La Villa Strangiato.”

<sup>97</sup> See Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 213 concerning holistic vs. linear modes of thinking and their (disproportionate) respective association with right- and left-brain thinking.

<sup>98</sup> Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 159.

the cultural cachet of Billie Holiday's music has risen owing to some extent to its very inaccessibility at the time of its initial dissemination, and to the way in which her style has not lent itself easily to imitation on a mass scale. Therefore, it retains those qualities of 'individuality' that allow us to receive it now as "undercoded."<sup>99</sup>

The continued interest in Rush's earlier music (1971-78) among those first introduced to the band's later music (1980-2002) suggests a similar "cultural cachet" at work.

Brackett also states:

[I]n highly heterogeneous societies, meaning is more like[ly] to result from a song's similarity to and difference from other songs within the total musical field, from the codes it activates and from the subject positions and competences it makes available to listeners that permit them to identify with those codes.<sup>100</sup>

As an example of this, the period from 1979 to 1987 marked an important turning point for Rush. In its newly composed music, the band completely abandoned its interest in extended composition by 1982. However, while increasing its reliance on shorter songs, the band also retained various Rush-signifying elements (such as the instrumental virtuosity and rhythmic complexities of progressive rock), significantly increased its reliance on music technology, saw its 1970s' music achieve "classic" status (especially among hardcore musician-fans), and grew in mainstream popularity. In the 1980s, Rush's "total musical field" included 1970s' progressive rock, hard rock, post-punk pop-rock and art pop, early-1980s arena rock, neo-progressive rock, progressive heavy metal, hard alternative rock, and progressive-influenced singer-songwriters. Increasing numbers of fans identified with Rush's status as "musicians' musicians," but the band's stylistic heterogeneity also facilitated its largest base of casual fans in the early 1980s.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 71.

<sup>100</sup> Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 23.

<sup>101</sup> In 1981 Rush received more U.S. platinum certifications than for any other artist: for *2112* (1976), *All the World's a Stage* (1976), and *Moving Pictures* (1981). From 1980 to 1985, Rush's five studio albums and one live album all went U.S. platinum. Between 1981 and 1995, the RIAA upgraded the certifications of Rush's four gold albums of the 1970s to at least single platinum status, and by 1993-95 it had certified Rush's four previously uncertified albums of the 1970s as U.S. gold. The RIAA also re-certified several post-1970s Rush albums at higher levels. See also Appendix A.

## Chapter 4—All This Machinery:

### Music Technology and Stylistic Ambivalence, 1980-87

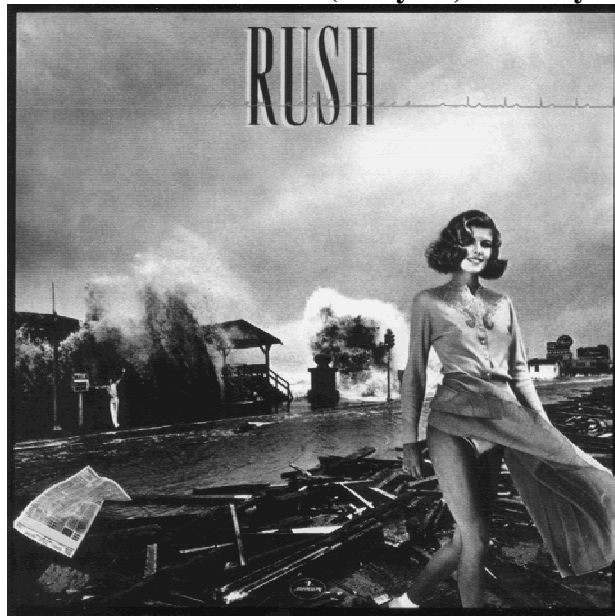
I look at myself as . . . a melodic composer with the synthesizer. . . . I can't play a lot of complex chord changes or move through a very complex structure, but I can find lots and lots of melodies. I can write lots of songs on a synthesizer. I can zone in on the sound that I want and make it speak for the mood I want to create.<sup>1</sup>

By the time we got to *Hold Your Fire* [1987] I think we used every synthesizer known to man . . . computers . . . software . . . samplers . . . MIDI keyboard controllers . . . pedal controllers . . .<sup>2</sup>

After *Signals* [1982] was finished, we felt it was kind of a failure in getting the right balance [between music technology and hard rock] . . . we felt like we leaned too heavily into keyboards and ignored the guitar aspect of it. . . . With *Power Windows* [1985] and *Hold Your Fire*, we felt we kind of achieved the balance.<sup>3</sup>

-Geddy Lee, 1984-91

**Figure 4.1: Album Cover of *Permanent Waves* (H. Syme, Mercury/Anthem, 1980)**



<sup>1</sup> Greg Armbruster, "Geddy Lee of Rush," *Keyboard*, September 1984, 63-65.

<sup>2</sup> Perry Stern, interview with Geddy Lee, "Rush: real life in a rock & roll band," *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Schulte, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "Rush: Straight from the Heart," *Canadian Musician* 13.5, October 1991, 36.

The album cover of *Permanent Waves* (1980), by Hugh Syme with input by Neil Peart (see Figure 4.1, above), implies a tide of cultural changes—the first wave of a hurricane has flooded the streets, destroyed buildings, and scattered a newspaper.<sup>4</sup> In the foreground, a beautiful young woman smiles towards the camera, her wavy perm hairdo punning on the album title but her Marilyn Monroe-like blown-up dress suggesting earlier times. In the distant left of the photo, a similarly anachronistic crossing guard seems to direct the proceedings and points to his “Walk – Cross Here” sign. Like the woman, he shows no fear at the impending second wave of the storm, and in the distant right still-standing business signs show the names Lee, Peart, and Lifeson. The hurricane represents the dramatic changes of the post-punk/post-progressive era and of music technology, but the intact elements suggest that Rush intends to remain standing.

#### **“The Spirit of Radio” (*Permanent Waves*, 1980)**

The album’s opening song, “The Spirit of Radio,” functioned as a rallying cry for the band to continue releasing new music into the 1980s. The release of *Permanent Waves* was intentionally timed so that it would be the very first major label album released in the new decade, and the album appeared in stores on New Year’s Day, 1980. The band wondered whether or not it would be able to update its sound while simultaneously retaining its mark of complex rhythms and instrumental virtuosity, but “The Spirit of Radio” brought Rush’s streamlined progressive power trio aesthetic (summarized in the song chart, including virtuosic unisons, short/vivid guitar solos,

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<sup>4</sup> The newspaper’s headline originally referenced the notoriously inaccurate 1948 Chicago *Tribune* headline “Dewey Defeats Truman.” Syme and Peart may have intended this as a stab at the U.S. media and/or rock critics. The *Tribune* forced Rush to blank out the headline, but non-U.S. LPs retained it.

The band recorded the album in the summer of 1979 at Le Studio near Morin Heights, Quebec, co-producing it with long-term colleague Terry Brown and recording it with engineer Paul Northfield.

succinct use of “odd metres,” and subtle synthesizers) into the larger mainstream while also bringing the larger mainstream (e.g., “modern rock”) into Rush.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the phrase “The Spirit of Radio” signified the Toronto-area “modern/new” free-form radio station 102.1 CFNY (later called “The Edge” and “Edge 102”), and the station played post-punk, blues, jazz, reggae, other world music, and so on—to which the members of Rush listened.<sup>5</sup> The station modelled itself after New York City “indie rock” (the Mecca being the underground rock club CBGB, 1973-), and the “NY” part of the station name specifically referenced “New York.” Alex Lifeson described the band’s 1981 tour-bus listening:

On the bus, we tend to listen to a lot of Bob Marley [reggae], Ultravox [new wave and synth-pop], Police [post-punk pop-rock], and the new bands coming out of Britain. What’s happening in North America now appears to be that people are going more and more for safe music. Without wishing to sound rude, bands like REO Speedwagon.<sup>6</sup>

By mentioning REO Speedwagon, Lifeson specifically implicates established hard rock bands that made considerable concessions to Top 40 radio. Neil Peart later said:

I always make the tapes that they play when people are coming in or between sets and so on. In the late seventies while touring England, I was adding in some of the music that was starting to happen at the time. I remember I had a couple of the Police songs on the “show tapes” . . . [A]udiences were booing, because if you like the Police, you couldn’t like Rush and if you like Rush, you couldn’t like the Police. . . . Here was another band . . . very interesting with good musicians and doing good stuff. There was no reason . . . not to like them. . . . [W]hen we started introducing those . . . influences into our music, a lot of our fans were appalled! It was like, “Oh no, Rush is putting reggae into their songs! Not them, too!!” It was like we betrayed them. . . . [They] wanted to hear Styx and Foreigner and Boston and the FM [hard rock radio music] of the seventies continue on. Suddenly, we were daring to break away and join up with these infidels . . .<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.edge102.com/> and <http://spiritofradio.ca/Articles/Essay.asp#history>. In the 1990s and early 2000s, “modern rock” referred to radio stations (such as CFNY and the LA-area 106.7 KROQ) that played “alternative rock,” including elements from hip hop and rap-metal. In early 1974, eventual CFNY program director Dave Marsden (then at an early, free-form version of CHUM-FM) was the first deejay to play a Rush song—“Finding My Way,” the opening song on *Rush*.

<sup>6</sup> Alex Lifeson, *Melody Maker*, 7 November 1981, 8. Lifeson may have been thinking of REO Speedwagon’s recent #1 U.S. Top 40 hit “Keep on Lovin’ You” and multi-platinum album *Hi Infidelity*.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Hamilton, interview with Neil Peart, “Counterparts,” *Canadian Musician*, 16.1 (1994), 39.

Peart thus made more explicit his ca 1980 appreciation for modern rock and his simultaneous difficulty with 1970s', pop-oriented, FM radio hard rock.

Late-1970s punk rock prided itself on its stripped-down aesthetic and its anarchic, intentionally “unprofessional” demeanour. This represented the antithesis of progressive rock. However, within a few years, certain post-punk, pop-punk, and new wave musicians demonstrated that they were *also* capable of constructing and playing structurally and rhythmically complicated music. For example, Talking Heads collaborated from 1978 to 1981 with “art rock”/minimalist/ambient musician-producer Brian Eno. The Police’s guitarist Andy Summers collaborated with Robert Fripp, guitarist-founder of the seminal progressive rock band King Crimson. Fripp and Eno also worked together in the 1970s. This music differs from Rush’s late-1970s progressive/hard fusion largely because it centres around minimalist-influenced interlocking rhythmic patterns. However, it represented one of the more fruitful directions for post-progressive artists of the 1980s, including Peter Gabriel and Rush.

Geddy Lee said in 1984:

We lose some [fans] as we move on, yet we gain new ones with each development. But there has always been a solid core of fans who remain through the changes. I think they appreciate that we don’t pander to their taste, yet at the same time, we haven’t lost our concern for quality. We still believe in the same things now as we did back at the beginning, except our abilities as musicians and our influences have moved on.<sup>8</sup>

In the same year, Peart said:

The guitar and drums have to interact rhythmically as much as the bass and drums do, to really start to stretch the limitations of the form. The Police are a good illustration of that.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Derek Oliver, article-interview with Lee, “Rush Release,” *Melody Maker*, 5 May 1984, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Freff, interview with Neil Peart, *Musician*, August 1984, 66.

“The Spirit of Radio” also provides a good illustration of what Peart means by the “guitar and drums hav[ing] to interact” just as much as the traditional rock rhythm section. Many of the recurring gestures of “The Spirit of Radio” display a raw, backbeat energy that fits perfectly with the aesthetic of early-1980s, post-punk music (itself influenced by reggae).<sup>10</sup> However, Rush consistently combines this energy with its unique hybrid of progressive rock and hard rock and with its ongoing penchant for virtuosity. With the single exception of a brief 7/4 instrumental break near the middle of the song, “The Spirit of Radio” remains entirely in 4/4. Until the mid-1980s, this would prove unusual among Rush’s most highly regarded songs.. In the instrumental sections before and between vocal sections, the virtuosic elements continue the somewhat modular approach of “La Villa Strangiato” (instrumental, 1978). They also anticipate the energy-meets-virtuosity aesthetic of “YYZ” (instrumental, 1981). Such elements include unison vs. contrapuntal aspects, syncopations, rhythm (but not metre) changes, and changes in instrumentation.

1970s’ hard rock tended towards modal constructions, whereas post-punk and early-1980s new wave tended towards major/minor diatonicism. Rush combines these in “The Spirit of Radio.” The song’s introduction touches on mixolydian and minor. This includes its main, circular energy riff (0:00-0:17) and its repeated, syncopated, semi-chromatic, unison ascent (0:17-0:27). By comparison, the song’s verses inscribe E *major*, including IV and V chords and very prominent thirds-of-chords in the vocal melody. The lyrics of the first two verses (0:27-1:24) recount one’s favourite disc jockey being an “unobtrusive companion” who plays “magic music [to] make your morning mood.” After an instrumental break on the same chord progression, Verse 2 resumes as

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<sup>10</sup> At least one later progressive rock band, Ozric Tentacles, incorporated reggae into its style.



the narrator encourages you to go “off on your way” in the “happy solitude” of your car. The rhythmic anticipations provide a lilting joy, as though driving while listening to the radio is a ritual to be savoured (see Example 4.1).

**Example 4.1: Beginning of Verse 2 of “The Spirit of Radio,” 1:02-1:09**

**NOTE: MP3 audio files of all notated examples in this study appear as links at: <http://durrellbowman.com/dissexamples.html>**

♩ = 128

E BaddE E/G# A B

Off on your way hit the op - en road there is mag - ic at your fing - ers

After this verse, Lifeson reprises the song’s circular, opening, mixolydian energy riff. On several synthesizers, Lee adds a simple, staccato accompanying gesture and a slow-moving, string-like diatonic ascent-descent through E/F#/G#/F# (with tenths). Lee reports that he created these synthesizer parts as keyboard sequences and then “wrote the bass and guitar lines to fit the sequences.”<sup>11</sup> The synthesizer parts build in intensity as the accompaniment for the song’s chorus, in which Peart’s lyrics enthuse about “invisible airwaves,” “antennas,” “bristling energy,” and “emotional feedback” (1:24-1:52). The following verse, exclusively in hard rock style, then explains the stylistic compromise: “All this machinery making modern music can still be openhearted.” However, the lyrics also provide the caveat that “glittering prizes and endless compromises shatter the illusion of integrity” (1:52-2:27).

After a repeat of the synth-laden chorus (2:27-2:53), a middle section (2:53-3:18) seems to remind the listener that this really still is Rush. Specifically, the band uses 7/4

<sup>11</sup> Greg Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 60.

and 1970s-style G-natural/G# cross relations and flat-VII (D major) hard rock chords. Similarly, after an instrumental hard rock version of the E major 4/4 verse (3:18-3:32), Lifeson reprises the circular, mixolydian energy riff. The band then quickly aborts it for a reprise (3:32-3:49) of the long-absent virtuosic unison section and the semi-chromatic unison ascent of the song's introduction. None of this music sounds much like the early 1980s, and the band could have ended the song after it. However, Rush wished to further its point about not compromising its integrity despite exploring certain new approaches.

Nearing the end of the song, the band twice inserts (at 3:49-3:58 and 4:05-4:11) reggae-styled variants of its diatonic E major verse material. Nothing in Rush's previous several dozen songs could have anticipated a stylistic move in this direction, but Peart's words actually derive from part of the lyrics of Simon and Garfunkel's 1965 song "The Sounds of Silence." The update accuses the music industry of focusing too narrowly on "the words of the profits," suggesting that music industry executives fail to live up to Paul Simon's subway/tenement "prophets." (Ironically, music producers and executives themselves modified Simon's original folk song to include rock instruments—bass and drums.) In this section of "The Spirit of Radio" Geddy Lee most often sings in his natural chest voice, contributing a laid-back vocal quality, coded as complacent or inevitable. Musically, the band conforms more to a "stripped down" (less busy) aesthetic, featuring stylized back-beats and pseudo-reggae/post-punk steel-drum sounds. As the second pseudo-reggae section attacks the nasty music industry, Lee sarcastically spits out the word "salesmen" and Alex Lifeson's angry, bluesy, wah-wah solo (4:18-4:36) evokes a chattering argument. After this fast/active/angry caricature, the band incorporates a second, more substantial reprise of the song's main unison, hard rock ascent. However, a comparatively simple "rock 'n' roll" piano part (played by Hugh

Syme) joins in to further heighten the stylistic ambiguity. Rush did sometimes use keyboards in the mid- to late-'70s, but for occasional melodic, timbral, or textural reasons, not for something like this. The song ends with a piano-accompanied version of the ascent, a final reprise of the energy riff (see Example 4.2), and an energetic ending cadence (4:36-4:56).<sup>12</sup> The rhetorical devices of the guitar solo arguably make a connection between chattering music industry “salesmen” and the “2112” priests.

**Example 4.2: Energy Riff of “The Spirit of Radio”<sup>13</sup>**



In 1992, Rush’s fellow Toronto compatriots the Barenaked Ladies featured a version of the energy riff from “The Spirit of Radio” (along with material derived from the 1981 Rush song “Tom Sawyer”) in their song “Grade 9,” which references the socially awkward early years of high school for “geeky” aspiring rock musicians—such as themselves. Thus, it functions not as broad comical parody (as in “Weird” Al Yankovic)

<sup>12</sup> Lifeson plays a Fender Stratocaster for this song and for “Different Strings.” Schwartz, *Guitar Player*, June 1980. He plays a Pyramid for “Jacob’s Ladder.” On the other songs, he mainly uses a Gibson ES-355. Lifeson often used Hiwatt amplification equipment (along with others) from 1978 to 1982. See [Author unknown], review-interview, “Alex Lifeson: *Grace under Pressure*,” *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 46, 49.

Neil Peart around this time merged some of his 1977-79 Slingerland drums with a new Tama Superstar set. The Tama bass drums again included a version of the “2112” man-and-star logo (painted by Geddy Lee’s wife Nancy). See Cheech Iero, article-interview with Neil Peart, *Modern Drummer*, April/May 1980 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0480.html>). Peart won numerous reader-based accolades in *Modern Drummer*: Most Promising New Drummer (1980), Best Rock Drummer (1980-86), Best Percussion Instrumentalist (1982), Best Multi-Percussionist (1983-86), Best All-Around Drummer (1986), and the magazine’s Hall of Fame (1983) and Honor Roll (1986).

<sup>13</sup> As an example of the energy riff’s ability to signify “Rush,” around 1999 Los Angeles album rock radio station 95.5 KLOS used it as a “sound bite” to introduce any of a number of Rush songs. Also, the two-part television mini-series *Trudeau* (2002) featured an excerpt from Rush’s “The Spirit of Radio” for the point in early 1980 (i.e., just as the song became known) when recent Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau agreed to return from what was supposed to be his retirement from politics.

or as critical/destructive parody (as in Frank Zappa) but as a *constructive* parody, one that acknowledges and celebrates aspects of one's background as a musician.<sup>14</sup>

Rush immediately strove to explore certain things about "The Spirit of Radio" in nearly all of its subsequent music. For example, from 1981 to 2002 the band's new songs averaged only about five minutes in duration, and it also continued to make space for virtuosic elements, retained a certain amount of non-standard time signatures, used recurring ("modular") gestures and sections, lyrically addressed relatively serious topics, incorporated music technology, and acknowledged other types of music. By comparison, in the early 1980s the pop-oriented music of former progressive rock bands such as Yes and Genesis only occasionally suggested progressive rock. By comparison, Rush retained its "pedagogical" hard/progressive status for several decades and thus continued to denote progressive rock for many fans and musician-fans and also to provide a context for them to explore additional progressive-oriented and "musicianly" rock music, including progressive heavy metal.

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<sup>14</sup> See Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open U. Press, 1990), 221. Around the time that the Barenaked Ladies recorded their first major label album (*Gordon*, 1992, including the Rush-referencing "Grade 9"), they provided backup vocals for "California Dreamline" (*Whale Music*, 1992) by the Rheostatics, a Toronto-area "art rock" band. On the same day, Rush's Neil Peart arrived (at Toronto's Reaction Studios) to contribute percussion tracks for a pair of additional songs on *Whale Music*. Rheostatics' guitarist Dave Bidini recalled the occasion in a 2002 article:

[The Rheostatics and the Barenaked Ladies] watched Neil warm up, a chimeric figure in his beaded African hat under the low studio lights. Head lowered, torso centred, feet kicking, his hands glancing over the drums, Neil played all afternoon. His touch was soft when it had to be, but propulsive, too, like a distance runner tugging the flow of blood to his heart. The African hat and marathon images fit with Peart having bicycled in west Africa and having written a book (*The Masked Rider*, 1996) about his experiences there. The marathon imagery also fits with Peart having used similar references in the Rush song "Marathon" (*Power Windows*, 1985).

### **“Freewill” (*Permanent Waves*, 1980)**

“Freewill,” the second song on *Permanent Waves*, criticizes those who allow themselves to be manipulated as “playthings” of unearthly powers or fate instead of taking responsibility for their own actions. The tagline of the individualist chorus exemplifies this: “I will choose a path that’s clear; I will choose free will.” The musical gestures compensate for aspects the previous song, “The Spirit of Radio,” by providing a much higher degree of “progressive” elements—virtuosic unisons (i.e., *also* underlying the A sections of Verse 1 and Verse 2), contrapuntal material (i.e., during the elaborate guitar solo), nearly four times as much in “odd metres” (i.e., often alternating measure by measure), and four tonal areas. A brief, but highly characteristic, musical gesture begins the song (0:00-0:03), marks off its extended instrumental section (at 2:57 and 3:59, in guitar/bass unison), and reappears just before its final cadence (at 5:08-5:11). The full version uses even eighth-notes in 4/4 time and descends through F Lydian and C major scales (see Example 4.3).

#### **Example 4.3: Opening Guitar Melody of “Freewill,”**

**0:00-0:03 and 5:08-5:11, first half also in bass/guitar at 2:57 and (in 7/8) at 3:59**



The voice/guitar/bass unison verse A sections (0:03-0:38, 1:27-2:02) outline F Lydian and shift among various groupings of 3/4 and 4/4. The verses reach for the G above F, but it remains “fleeting,” like the “fortune hunt” referred to later (see Example 4.4).

Example 4.4: Verse 1 of "Freewill," 0:18-0:38

$\bullet = 164$

The musical score consists of six systems of staves. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and two piano accompaniment lines (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 164. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature starts in 6/4 and changes to 8/4 at the beginning of the second system, then to 7/4 at the beginning of the third system, and returns to 6/4 for the remainder of the piece. The lyrics are: "There are those who think that life has no - thing left to chance, a host of ho - ly hor - rors to di - rect our aim - less dance." A synthesizer part is indicated by "synth:" in the first system of the third system, with a long note spanning across the systems.

There are those who think that life has no - thing left to chance, a  
host of ho - ly hor - rors to di - rect our aim - less dance.

synth:

These metrical and tonal instabilities underscore Peart's lyrical sentiments about the "aimless dance" of those who accept the precepts of predestination.

The pre-chorus bridge (0:38-1:03, 2:02-2:27, and 4:01-4:38) switches to cut time (2/2) and strummed guitar chords. The syncopated, but highly tonal (one sharp) D major chorus (1:03-1:27, 2:27-2:57, and 4:38-5:08) regularly follows one of the lyrics' quick-fix solutions with a cynical/pseudo-magical rhythmic highlight. This reinforces the lyrics' rhymes ("some celestial voice"/"still have made a choice," "phantom fears and kindness that can kill"/"I will choose free will"). The band specifically *excludes* the rhythmic highlight after the last line, meaning that free will inscribes the only valid path for individualists. After the chorus, the metre switches to 5/4 and the chords cycle back to "flat-side" F, thus lamenting that society keeps privileging a variety of quick-fix solutions over individual decision-making.<sup>15</sup>

The song's highly contrapuntal instrumental middle section (in 6/8 and including the guitar solo) includes a held octave pedal point on G in its first twenty seconds or so (2:59-3:18). Lee and Peart establish a bass/drum groove, and Lifeson eventually enters on bent pitches centred around G. However, whereas Lee's bass line features D minor or F mixolydian ("flat-side") passages, Lifeson's guitar solo outlines F *lydian*, with its B-naturals and E-naturals (see Example 4.5).

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<sup>15</sup> One could argue that Lee sings F-naturals on the word "choose" at the end of each chorus.

**Example 4.5: Bass Guitar and Guitar Solo Excerpt from “Freewill,” 3:13-3:22**

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a tempo of 104. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the bass guitar line in the lower staff and the guitar line in the upper staff. The second system continues the bass guitar line and the guitar solo, which includes a four-note slur. The third system shows the final part of the bass guitar line and the guitar solo.

The held octave pedal points on G at the beginning of this section (synthesizer, then guitar) suggest an overriding “higher power.” Even though the G pedal dissipates just into the guitar solo, it remains “stuck in one’s head” as one listens to the remainder of the section (3:18-3:59). The band then highlights the third bridge (4:01-4:38, in 2/2) with Lee’s extremely high vocals and Peart’s lyrical moral about the inadequacies of religion and other herd-like, quick-fix mentalities. After the final chorus (4:38-5:08), Lifeson restates the opening F lydian gesture (5:08-5:11). However, a final cadence (5:11-5:21) on G major confirms that the song’s conflicting elements all serve as slaves to G (“God”?), but as with “2112” Rush certainly does not favour this ending.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The first half of *Permanent Waves* ends with the nature-/storm-themed, mainly instrumental, and metrically complex “Jacob’s Ladder” (7:26). The opening pair of songs on the second half of *Permanent Waves* comprise “Entre Nous” (only the title is in French) and “Different Strings” (lyrics by Lee). Both provide positive viewpoints on “differences within relationships” and use 4/4 time. The latter includes



### **“Tom Sawyer” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981)**

*Moving Pictures* stands as Rush’s best-selling album. In 1995, the Recording Industry Association of America certified it as quadruple platinum: four million copies sold in the United States. The RIAA had earlier certified the album gold and platinum in 1981 and double platinum in 1984.<sup>17</sup> The album gained its favourable reputation largely based on the four songs on its first half: “Tom Sawyer,” “Red Barchetta,” the instrumental “YYZ,” and “Limelight.” These continue the succinct individualism embodied in 1980’s “The Spirit of Radio” and “Freewill,” but they also pursue a more picturesque (or personal) idiom in keeping with the album title’s filmic reference.

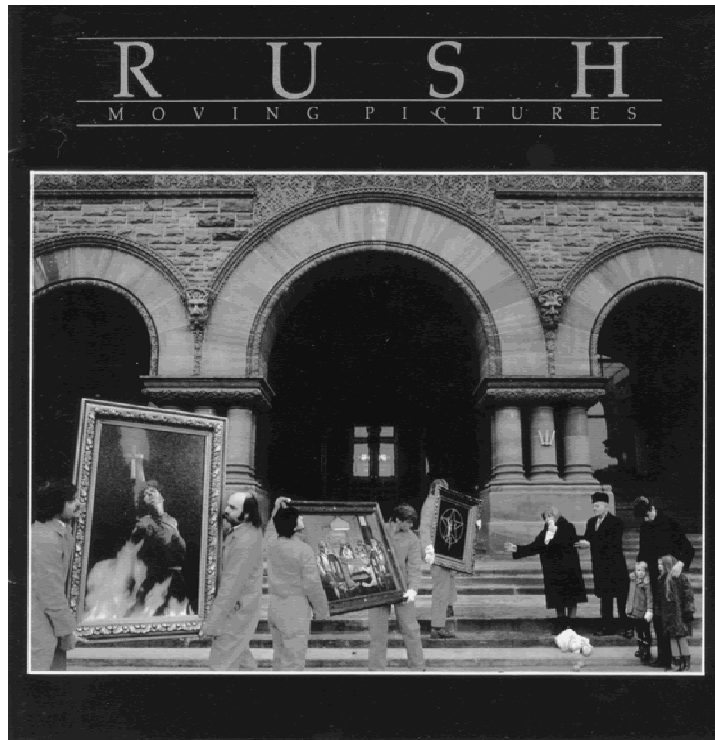
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contributions on grand piano by Hugh Syme, and the band thus intended it as a studio-only production number. *Permanent Waves* (1980), like *A Farewell to Kings* (1977) and *Hemispheres* (1978), concludes with a moderate-length extended work. “Natural Science” (9:17), Rush’s penultimate extended work, reflects one of Rush’s most diverse statements, both lyrically and instrumentally. The work includes nature sounds and folk-like acoustic guitar sections as well as some of the band’s most rhythmically complex and timbrally heavy playing. Lyrically and musically, the work reflects an anxiety over science and technology, as in: “Science like nature must also be tamed.” It begins with the sounds of water and birds, and tide pools represent the basic building blocks of humanity throughout the work. However, 7/8 metres and electronically derived sounds in the two middle verses (“Hyperspace”) represent a “mechanized world out of hand.” Overall, the work espouses the honesty of the individual (“Art as expression, not as market campaigns”), and thus it relates to Verse 3 of the same album’s opening song “The Spirit of Radio” (e.g., “All this machinery making modern music can still be open-hearted”).

Around this time (1978-79) Peart also worked on the lyrics for an extended composition based on the moralistic, Middle English 14<sup>th</sup>-century epic poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (concerning a mysterious knight in King Arthur’s court), which Tolkien translated into modern English. However, Peart abandoned this when Rush began to move into a more succinct songwriting mode at the very end of the 1970s and into the 1980s.

<sup>17</sup> As with *Permanent Waves* (1980), the band recorded *Moving Pictures* at Le Studio in Morin Heights, Quebec, co-producing it with Terry Brown and recording it with engineer Paul Northfield.

**Figure 4.2: Album Cover of *Moving Pictures* (H. Syme, Mercury/Anthem, 1981)<sup>18</sup>**



Hugh Syme's album cover for *Moving Pictures* (see Figure 4.2, above) combines a title pun on the band's early 1980s' cinematic/picturesque approach to songwriting with a multiple visual play on words: people moved emotionally by pictures being moved physically. The front picture depicts Joan of Arc (portrayed by one of Syme's associates), the middle picture reproduces C. M. Coolidge's "A Friend in Need" (a.k.a. "Dogs Playing Poker"), and the rear picture comprises the man-against-star logo of Rush's album *2112* (1976). These appear in front of the distinctive three-arch entrance of the Ontario Provincial Legislature in Toronto's Queen's Park. The three pictures and the three arches also visually play on the fact that Rush comprises three members, a recurring motif on Rush's album covers in the 1980s and 1990s.

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<sup>18</sup> *Kerrang!* listed *Moving Pictures* at #43 on its 1989 Top 100 all-time heavy metal album list. See [http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang\\_p2.htm](http://www.rocklist.net/kerrang_p2.htm).

“Tom Sawyer” conforms to a slow tempo for a Rush “anthem:” cut time with the half-note pulse at 88 beats per minute, and a march-like feeling pervades nearly the entire song.<sup>19</sup> It begins with an Oberheim synthesizer “glissando,” actually a descending-frequency analogue filter sweep, which arrives at a low E pedal and resembles the THX movie “motto.” Peart simultaneously plays a bass (kick)/snare/hi-hat pattern, emphasizing the slow backbeat (0:00-0:05). These elements continue throughout the vocal introduction (0:05-0:11), in which Lee’s vocals introduce us to “today’s Tom Sawyer,” a “modern-day warrior” with a “mean, mean stride” and “mean, mean pride.”<sup>20</sup> The introductory vocal line sparsely touches only on three notes: D with some B and the E a fifth below. This falls in Lee’s natural baritone range and establishes the song’s “straight” rhythms and syncopations (see Example 4.6).

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<sup>19</sup> The band played earlier live versions of the song at a faster tempo.

<sup>20</sup> Neil Peart co-wrote the lyrics of “Tom Sawyer” with Pye Dubois, the non-performing lyricist of Canadian band Max Webster. Rush played on its “Battlescar” in early 1980, and Dubois gave Peart the lyrics “Louis the Warrior.” Dubois also later co-wrote Rush lyrics in each of 1987, 1993, and 1996. See also <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/tomsawyer/> for information about Mark Twain’s novel.

### Example 4.6: Introduction of “Tom Sawyer,” 0:00-0:11

$\text{♩} = 88$   
synthesizer filter glissando (to E pedal)

hihat  
snare  
kick

(synth pedal continues)

(voice:) A mod-ern day war-ri-or,

mean, mean stride; to-day's Tom Saw-yer, mean, mean pride.

Immediately after the words “mean” and “pride” (emphasizing off-beats), Lee reinitiates the synthesizer sweep. At that point, he and Lifeson enter on bass and guitar for the song’s main introduction (0:11-0:22), which expands Peart’s earlier drum pattern.<sup>21</sup>

Each chord of the deliberately slow progression—E major, D major, D sus 4 (A bass), and C major—emerges from a relatively active eighth-quarter-eighth pattern on a

<sup>21</sup> In 1979, Lee bought a customized 1972 Fender Jazz bass. He used it prominently from 1980 to 1983, especially on *Moving Pictures* (1981). He used Ashley pre-amps, BGW power amps, and Thiele Design cabinets with JBL speakers, plus earlier equipment. See Stern, “Rush,” *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988. Lifeson mainly played on his Gibson ES-355 and on several different Fender Stratocasters. See “Alex Lifeson,” *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 44-51.

previously established low E. The accretionary/anticipatory strategy continues as the eight-measure pattern underscores Verse 1 (0:22-0:36, see Example 4.7).

**Example 4.7: Verses 1 and 2 of “Tom Sawyer,” 0:22-0:36 and 2:42-2:56**

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs), and lyrics. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the tempo is marked as quarter note = 88.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Though his mind is not for rent, don't put him down as arrogant." The piano accompaniment features a bass line with a "SWAGGER-->" annotation. The lyrics continue: "No, his mind is not for rent to any god or government."

**System 2:** The vocal line starts with "(small notes for v. 2)" and the lyrics "his re-serve a quiet defense - rid-ing". The piano accompaniment continues with the same bass line pattern. The lyrics continue: "Al ways hope ful yet dis content, - he knows chang -".

**System 3:** The vocal line has the lyrics "out the days ev-ents: LINKING the riv-er." and "es aren't per-ma-ment, Change is." The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line. The word "LINKING" is written in large, bold letters above the piano part.

Lee follows a vocal melody implied by the continuing chord progression, but he sings mainly in the *even*-numbered measures as the chords ring through from the odd-

numbered measures. The anthem-like rhythmic swagger and ringing chords initially suggest arrogance, or at least the “naughty” behaviour of the original Tom Sawyer in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) by Mark Twain (1835-1910). However, the lyrics immediately deflect this, telling us not to “put him down as arrogant,” because he is just “riding out the day’s events . . . .”

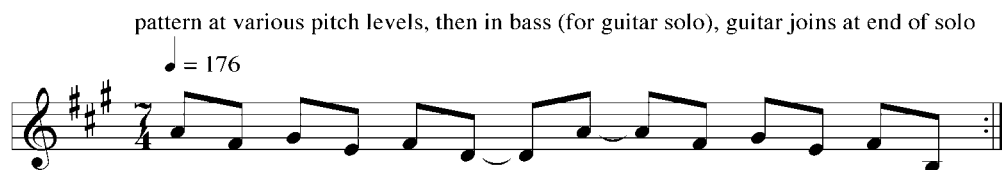
The verse music shifts modally from E mixolydian to E minor via G-naturals and C-naturals (flat-6 of E). This recalls Rush’s earlier use of “illusory hope” flat-6 in “Xanadu,” “Cygnus X-1,” and “La Villa Strangiato.” The four-chord verse progression culminates with C major (flat-6) chords. This occurs just after the lyrics refer to the new hero’s “reserve, a quiet defense” and to his being “always hopeful, yet discontent.” The unison linking pattern (C/B/A) at the end of the verse explicitly connects Rush’s Tom Sawyer with Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer by clarifying that the day’s events involve, like the original’s fishing, frog-catching, or rafting, “the river.” It also extends the emphasis on C natural. After a modified, instrumental version of the verse (0:36-0:47), a bridge (0:47-1:08) more definitively establishes E minor. This reduces the earlier chord progression to four measures by increasing its harmonic rhythm. Lyrically, the bridge also associates Rush’s version of Tom Sawyer with contemporary society.

The closest thing to a “chorus” (1:08-1:28) centres around open fifths that vaguely “lead” from E’s dominant B back to E. Lee sings D#s on both instances of the word “world,” which suggests a new (tonal rather than modal) slant on the earlier E-based material. A reprise of the synthesizer filter sweeps also suggests this. As in “The Spirit of Radio” (1980) and “One Little Victory” (2002) this also addresses Rush’s combination of post-punk major/minor keys with older-style modal diatonicism. A new version of the vocal introduction follows (1:28-1:33). It features an expanded pitch palette as well as

lyrical references to “getting high” and “get[ting] by on you.” On the surface, this suggests a drug reference. However, it seems more likely that Rush wishes to acknowledge its expanding musical influences and audience. Moreover, the band seems to offer *itself* as a new role model (“Tom Sawyer”) for finding one’s own path in a complicated society, and I thus disagree with Carol Selby Price and Robert M. Price’s argument that the song implies *recruitment*.<sup>22</sup>

The song’s following instrumental section (1:33-2:32) features one of the band’s most characteristic asymmetrical time signatures: 7/4. It recalls Peart’s song-opening drum parts but also features Lee on several different synthesizers. This includes slow-moving E/F# alternations and filter sweeps, but it mostly highlights a descending chain of thirds on a Minimoog synthesizer.<sup>23</sup> The section soon becomes “traditional Rush,” with Lee taking over his own synthesizer patterns on bass guitar in order to support Lifeson’s guitar solo. The solo ends with Lifeson re-joining the pattern in a Rush-characteristic virtuosic unison (2:27-2:32, see Example 4.8).

**Example 4.8: 7/4 Instrumental Pattern of “Tom Sawyer,” 1:33-2:32**



The lengthy instrumental section precipitated by this pattern initially replaces Verse 2. To get back to the earlier music, the band restates its earlier eight-measure, four-chord,

<sup>22</sup> See Carol Selby Price and Robert M. Price, *Mystic Rhythms: The Philosophical Vision of Rush* (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Wildside Press, 1999; originally published by Woodstock Press as volume 2 of *Popular Music of Today*, 1998), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Lee derived this synthesizer gesture from a Minimoog “test pattern” he used during sound checks. See Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 55.

“swagger” progression (2:32-2:43), returning the time signature to cut time but now featuring Peart’s drumming prowess more prominently. Finally, Verse 2 (2:43-2:56, see Example 4.7, above) succinctly refers to the recurring Rush notion of neither god nor government being worthy of one’s mind, and it also refers to Change as a permanent philosophical and aesthetic strategy—meaning that “small-c” changes have no lasting effect.<sup>24</sup> The bridge and chorus sections follow much as before, and with nearly identical lyrics (3:08-3:29 and 3:29-3:48), but an expanded version of the original vocal introduction (3:48-3:57) then implies that Rush, like Tom Sawyer, is free-spirited, resourceful, and often initially misunderstood. It also suggests that the band enjoys the “friction of the day” of provoking its audience, and, revealingly, the song ends with a coda (3:57-4:33, eventually faded out) comprised entirely of variations of the song’s comparatively “difficult” 7/4 instrumental section.<sup>25</sup>

### **Sightings of “Tom Sawyer,” 1992-2002**

“Tom Sawyer,” Rush’s best-known song among the general public, appeared in three major motion pictures in 1998: *Small Soldiers*, *The Waterboy*, and *Whatever*. Joe Dante’s *Small Soldiers* combines human characters and computer-animated toy characters. High-tech gadgetry, including “real” intelligence, animate the title characters and their toy enemies. The main teenage boy and girl characters, are social misfits, somewhat rebellious, and attempt to solve the mystery of the toys’ “magical” power,

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<sup>24</sup> I derived this study’s main title, “Permanent Change,” from this song. Similar phrases appear in additional Rush songs, such as “constant change” and “adept at adaptation” on *Signals* (1982).

<sup>25</sup> Around this time, Peart abandoned a lyric called “Wessex Tales,” based on Thomas Hardy. See Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 52.



which, needless to say, gets out of hand. The filmmakers of *Small Soldiers* suggest the possibility that rebellious, suburban (“Tom Sawyer”) teenagers in 1998 might very well listen to hard rock music from 1969-87.<sup>26</sup> However, the rock music selections in this film, as well as Jerry Goldsmith’s self-referential uses of his score for *Patton* (WW2 film, 1970) and of Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries” (referencing similar helicopter scenes in *Apocalypse Now*, 1979), suggest that the filmmakers had a multi-generational audience in mind.<sup>27</sup> In order to appeal to the film’s younger audience, the CD “soundtrack” consists of a series of ten late-1990s hip hop remixes of most of the classic rock songs used in the film. DJ Z-Trip’s remix of “Tom Sawyer” gives the original’s 7/4 instrumental gesture two extra eighth-notes and also simplifies most of the song’s drum parts, thus largely erasing any vestiges of progressive rock.<sup>28</sup> By comparison, his updated guitar bridge, scratching effects, vocal manipulations, and chord resequencings succeed better in re-animating the original. Ironically, the remix extends the original by two minutes (6:33 vs. 4:33), which counters Rush’s own considerable efforts towards relatively concise song forms.

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<sup>26</sup> “Tom Sawyer” appears as background source music during a telephone conversation between the two main characters. My Rush fan surveys confirm that Rush’s music still resonates for people as young as 12 or 13. The movie also includes music by Led Zeppelin (the kids’ favourite band), Pat Benatar, Cheap Trick, the Cult, Gary Glitter, the Pretenders, Queen, Billy Squier, and Edwin Starr.

<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the filmmakers were not averse to making fun of people around their age who like “kids” music. For example, the toy soldiers chose the Spice Girls’ then-recent pop hit “If You Wanna Be My Lover” as the featured element in a scene of “psychological warfare” against the rest of the characters (enemy humans and toys). The “airhead” mother of one of the children comments that she “love[s] that song.”

<sup>28</sup> This recalls the “updating”—by Larry Mullen and Adam Clayton (the “rhythm section” of the rock band U2)—of Lalo Schiffrin’s original 5/4 theme for TV’s *Mission: Impossible*. In their score for Brian De Palma’s 1996 film *Mission: Impossible*, they extend this to two measures of 4/4 time. A hip-hop artist also sampled the early Rush song “In the Mood.”

The 1998 Adam Sandler comedy *The Waterboy*, directed by Frank Coraci, uses Rush's "Tom Sawyer" to underscore a montage establishing Sandler's misfit title character as a football tackling star. The character becomes an unlikely hero when angered, and like the "modern day warrior" of Rush's song he has a "mean, mean stride" and a "mean, mean pride." Like the earlier Tom Sawyers (Mark Twain's and Rush's), Sandler's character revels in friction instead of trading away its energy.<sup>29</sup> Susan Skoog sets her independent film *Whatever* (1998) in suburban New Jersey in the year of Rush's actual song—1981. "Tom Sawyer" functions as the featured song in establishing the mood and setting for the first of the film's numerous party scenes, where half-drunk/half-stoned teenaged potheads debate the relative merits of free will and Ronald Reagan. The entire soundtrack resonates with punk, mainstream post-punk ("new wave"), "early alternative," art rock/pop, and early mainstream heavy metal songs that circumscribed nearly every early 1980s suburban context.<sup>30</sup>

Two Rush anthologies (1990 and 1997) include "Tom Sawyer," as do a pair of live Rush albums (1981 and 1998). The song also appears on *Arena Rock, Vol. 3* (1992), *Hard Rock Essentials, Vol. 1* (1995), *18 Headbangers from the 80s* (1995), *Power of Rock: 16 Classic Rock Hits* (1997), in a death metal cover version by Disarray, on *Red Star: Tribute to Rush* (1999), and in a progressive metal version by Deadsy (*Commencement*, 2002, recorded in 1999). The Disarray version of "Tom Sawyer" features grunted or "demonic" death metal vocals. It not only transforms the 7/4 section

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<sup>29</sup> The rest of *The Waterboy*'s soundtrack (and the related CD) combines classic rock songs from the late 1960s through the early 1990s (including CCR, the Doors, Earth Wind & Fire, John Mellencamp, and Joe Walsh) with late-1990s alternative rock songs.

<sup>30</sup> This includes songs by Blondie, David Bowie, the Jam, Motörhead, Iggy Pop and the Stooges, the Pretenders, the Ramones, Roxy Music, the Patti Smith Group, and Siouxsie and the Banshees.

into 4/4 (as with the *Small Soldiers*' remix), but it *also* slows it down. The Barenaked Ladies used the swagger progression of "Tom Sawyer" (along with the "energy-riff" of "The Spirit of Radio") in their 1992 song "Grade 9," which also references Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" (1971, but used long after as the last dance at high school dances), Vince Guaraldi's music for 1970s' "Peanuts" television specials, and *Star Trek: Wrath of Khan* (1982). The Rush references contrast the double-time ska-like tempo and backbeat lightheartedness (e.g., "red leather tie...humongous binder...minor 9er") of the rest of the song. Metallica's "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)" (*Master of Puppets*, 1986) includes a recurring gesture that similarly recalls the swagger gesture of Rush's "Tom Sawyer," and Vernon Reid (the African-American rock guitarist, formerly of Living Colour) quoted the song's 7/4 instrumental section in one of his songs. Clearly, "serious, young musicians" in the 1980s, including Metallica, the Barenaked Ladies, and Vernon Reid, took "musicianly" songs such as Rush's "Tom Sawyer" very seriously.<sup>31</sup> So did the Los Angeles album rock radio station KLOS, which in the late 1990s used the song's distinctive opening synthesizer sound within its multi-artist style-signifying collage. A late-2000 Nissan Maxima television ad used the same part of the song, including the subsequent drumming, but an excerpt from the album's following song—about a car—might have been more appropriate.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Metallica made inquiries about hiring Geddy Lee to produce of *Master of Puppets*. Metallica's metrically complex and virtuosic heavy metal, the complex rhythms and textures of singer-songwriters Kate Bush and Tori Amos, and the concept albums and shifting rhythms of Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails all owe something to progressive rock.

<sup>32</sup> Peart found the inspiration for the album's second song, "Red Barchetta," in a 1973 short story. See Richard S. Foster, "A Nice Morning Drive," in *Road & Track*, November 1973, 148-150. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/rush-related/nicedrive.html>. The protagonist defies the "Motor Law" and races his uncle's vintage title car (a kind of Ferrari) through the countryside. He gets into a high-speed chase with the police (driving a "gleaming alloy air-car"), then the music eases up as the narrator loses them and ends up back at his uncle's country farmhouse. One can easily imagine late-20<sup>th</sup>-century versions of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn taking a pristine sports car out for a spin, just to see

### “YYZ” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981)

The third track on *Moving Pictures*, “YYZ,” comprises Rush’s best-known instrumental work. In keeping with the band’s less extreme approach of the early 1980s, it lasts for less than half the duration of the band’s preceding instrumental work, “La Villa Strangiato” (4:24 vs. 9:34). Among other things, the work keeps its synthesizer components and “odd metres” relatively modest and, most importantly, balances alternations among unison, contrapuntal, and homophonic textures. The U.S. Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences recognized its broad “musicianly” appeal by nominating it for the 1981 Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental, but Rush’s “YYZ” lost to another rock trio—the Police’s post-progressive, post-punk, modal, semi-exotic, and minimalism-inspired “Behind My Camel” (*Zenyatta Mondatta*, 1980).

Rush often used unusual time signatures and complex rhythms in order to make a point or sometimes just to “mix things up,” and it bases the opening of “YYZ” on Morse code for the radio call letters of Toronto’s Pearson International Airport:<sup>33</sup>

Y -.- Y -.- Z -.-. or  $7/8 + 7/8 + 6/8$  or 

(At the quarter-note level, one could also interpret this as two measures of 5/4.) Neil Peart first sounds this pattern on the crotale of his ride cymbal (0:00-0:05). The band then transforms this musically (0:05-0:29). Lifeson plays low Cs and lower F#s on the

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if they can get away with it. Arguably, John Hughes accomplished just this in *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* (1986). In that film, a trio of teenage misfits “borrow” just such a preserved sports car for just such a joyride. The car’s “well-weathered leather, hot metal and oil . . . the blur of the landscape” and its “screeching tires” inscribe what Richard Middleton calls a “‘realistic’ sense of temporal flow” and even the possibility of something like a “conscious experience” for the listener. See Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 251. The song’s music video also includes several segments of basic early computer animation, similar to racing car video games of the early to mid-1980s.

<sup>33</sup> Many Rush fans collect “YYZ” baggage tags. Canadian airports use identifiers based on weather transmitter codes, not on city names.

quarter-notes and eighth-notes respectively. (This recalls the C/F# tritone structures in the main theme of “La Villa Strangiato.”) Lee plays a slow-moving synthesizer line that meanders from the tritone’s one pitch to the other. Building a metrical structure around an airport code fits with Richard Middleton’s expansion of Gino Stefani’s 1973 work on musical semiotics: “There is a *range* of codes operating in any musical event, some of them not even strictly musical but emanating from general schemes governing movement, gesture, rhetoric, affect, and so on.”<sup>34</sup> “YYZ” presents a coded meaning because the band “transliterated” these non-musical elements musically. Rush played “YYZ” at least eight hundred times between 1981 and 2003. Thus, it inscribed one of the band’s perpetual, affective “home connections,” and, of course, one also pronounces the “Z” of “YYZ” as “Zed,” in the Anglo-Canadian manner.

“YYZ” also comprises codes based on “general schemes governing motion.”<sup>35</sup> After the opening sections, a brief, “sputtering” passage (with Lee on bass, 0:29-0:36) functions as a transition to the next section, which features virtuosic 12/8 unison embellishments of the F#/C tritone (0:36-0:43). The following music (0:43-1:11 and 1:11-1:38) provides a playful two-part 4/4 section, first with the guitar and bass in unison and then in elaborate counterpoint (see Example 4.9).

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<sup>34</sup> Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 173.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

**Example 4.9: Excerpts from Unison/Contrapuntal Sections of “YYZ”**  
**these gestures alternate with similar ones based on C major, ca 0:43-1:38**

The image displays two musical excerpts from the piece "YYZ". The first excerpt is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 136 bpm. It features a complex bass line with triplets and a treble line with rests. The second excerpt, labeled "[12 measures later]", shows a treble line with a triplet and a bass line with a triplet and a syncopated rhythm.

Some of this recalls stylistic features of early-1970s progressive rock, especially music by the U.K. band Yes. The following section features Lifeson’s funky, syncopated guitar chords alternating with highly virtuosic “stop-time” interjections by Lee on bass and by Peart on drums (1:38-2:22). Lifeson then plays a semi-virtuosic guitar solo over the still-continuing B/C changes (2:22-2:51), with Peart adding unusual, sample-like sounds.

After the guitar solo, which ends with an unaccompanied descending sequence (as in Vivaldi’s violin music), a slower, 2/2 section with an A pedal in the bass and brassy synthesizer chords (2:51-3:20) provides what Neil Peart calls the “big sappy . . . bridge in the middle that is really orchestrated, really emotional, really rich [to] half symboli[se] the tremendous emotional impact of coming home.”<sup>36</sup> This demonstrates that David Brackett’s idea of the importance of “media image, biographical details, mood, and historical and social associations” can even hold for an entirely instrumental work.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> See Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1995), 9. Brackett does not actually discuss instrumental music, but his points nonetheless hold for “YYZ.”

After the big, sappy bridge, the band reprises the unison and contrapuntal “playful elaboration” sections (0:43-1:11-1:38) at 3:20-3:48-4:14. A final virtuosic pairing of bass and drums (4:14-4:17) leads into a brief Morse Code tritone coda (4:17-4:24).<sup>38</sup> On the whole, the work evokes mechanical signals followed by: complicated hesitations, the excitement of travelling somewhere new, and a new set of signals at the end. This affirms Peart’s comments that “The song is loosely based on airport-associated images. Exotic destinations, painful partings, happy landings, that sort of thing.”<sup>39</sup> Peart elsewhere explains that this provided a “shorter, more concise instrumental that was actually a song with verses and a chorus...à la [jazz-rock band] Weather Report.”<sup>40</sup>

### **“Limelight” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981)**

The first half of *Moving Pictures* concludes with “Limelight.” Album rock radio stations frequently played this song, and it also appears on Rhino Records’ anthology of 1980s power rock (2000). As its title suggests, the song concerns fame, but Peart’s lyrics actually incorporate *both* meanings of “limelight.” (The concert stages on which Rush regularly performed for thousands of fans featured extensive lighting systems.) In his lyrics, Peart outlines a quite personal perspective and admits to a certain degree of discomfort about public life, which would have included constant autograph-seekers and a continual lack of personal space (see Table 4.1).

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<sup>38</sup> The Morse Code part of the coda can be interpreted in numerous ways, but it does spell out the airport codes of cities in three exotic locations: Indonesia, Taiwan, and Afghanistan. The music then ends on a melodic descent to B, which the band earlier anticipated as a possible resolution to the pervasive tritone.

<sup>39</sup> Neil Peart, “The Drummer Sounds Off,” Rush Backstage Club newsletter, March 1990 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/rbcasoh.html>).

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 54.

**Table 4.1: Lyrics and Form of “Limelight” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981)**

Intro

Verse 1

Living on a lighted stage approaches the unreal for those who think and feel,  
In touch with some reality beyond the gilded cage.

Verse 2

Cast in this unlikely role, ill-equipped to act, with insufficient tact,  
one must put up barriers to keep oneself intact.

Chorus

Living in the limelight, the universal dream for those who wish to seem.  
Those who wish to be must put aside the alienation,  
get on with the fascination, the real relation, the underlying theme.

Verse 3

Living in a fisheye lens, caught in the camera eye, I have no heart to lie.  
I can't pretend a stranger is a long-awaited friend.

Verse 4 (varied)

All the world's indeed a stage, and we are merely players,  
performers and portrayers,  
Each another's audience outside the gilded cage.

Chorus

Solo

Chorus

Several earlier Rush songs provide precedents for these lyrics.<sup>41</sup>

Musically, “Limelight” features an energetic, distorted guitar riff, but the song’s frequent metre shifts also underscore the discomfort and mixed feelings experienced by the protagonist and the song ends in the resigned-sounding relative minor: G#. In 1988, Robin Tolleson of the magazine *Bass Player* introduced jazz drummer (e.g., former Miles Davis associate) Tony Williams to “Limelight,” and Williams spontaneously provided a sense of the song’s “feel” or “groove:”

Even though it's a 7/4 here and goes into 3 over there, it feels really relaxed. I get an emotional feeling from it. I like the bass playing and the bass sound. The groove is good, and that's the bass and the drums.<sup>42</sup>

On Rush’s ongoing use of such time signatures, Geddy Lee points out:

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<sup>41</sup> For example, “Making Memories” (*Fly by Night*, 1975) outlines the band’s positive attitude about its touring apprenticeship (“we go on diggin’ every show”). However, it also accepts the transitory nature of the music business (“[in] the morning . . . it’s time for us to go”).

<sup>42</sup> Robin Tolleson, quoting Tony Williams, in “Bass Is Still the Key,” *Bass Player*, Nov./Dec. 1988. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/bp1288.html>.



We've played in seven almost as much as we've played in 4/4, you know. So for us to be into seven is the most natural thing in the world. It's probably as natural to us as it is for Bill Bruford [of Yes, King Crimson, etc.] to play in five. He can make it seem so smooth. . . . But it depends on how familiar you are with that particular feel and how much you thought out the music . . . so it doesn't feel herky-jerky.<sup>43</sup>

John J. Sheinbaum similarly discusses the manner in which Chris Squire “creates a sense of rhythmic drive by articulating syncopations and then emphasizing the downbeats” in the Yes song “Roundabout” (1971).<sup>44</sup> In “Limelight,” Rush certainly demonstrates the influence of such earlier progressive rock in stylistically asserting its varying downbeats, but at the same time the song recalls the band’s earlier songs “Something for Nothing” (1976) and “Circumstances” (1978), with Lifeson’s riffs and guitar solo similarly evoking heavy metal much more than progressive rock.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Tom Mulhern, article-interview with Lee, “Geddy Lee of Rush, Rock’s Leading Bassist,” *Guitar Player*, April 1986, 86.

<sup>44</sup> John J. Sheinbaum, “Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values,” Chapter 1 of *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Kevin Holm-Hudson, ed., 33. In a footnote to the same “bass/groove” section of the article, Sheinbaum refers to Rush’s frequent use of 7/8 time as “fascinating not because such a meter is ‘complex,’ but because the admittedly complex meter is used as the backdrop for grooves that sound so smooth, balanced, and straightforwardly regular” (42, footnote 25). This concurs with Tony Williams’ assessment of “Limelight.”

<sup>45</sup> The opening song of the second half of *Moving Pictures*, “The Camera Eye” (10:58), comprises Rush’s last composition with a duration of more than 6:34. Influenced by the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century U.S. author John Dos Passos (e.g., vivid characterizations and point-blank stream-of-consciousness writing), the song evokes images of New York and then London. After opening city sounds (i.e., car horns, cars, police whistles, yelling), it begins with a multi-sectional instrumental introduction, thus recalling the opening of “Xanadu” and “Cygnus X-1” (1977). The song initially features Lee’s array of synthesizers, and he abandons his bass guitar in favour of these “electro-pop” elements for about the first half of the song. Various parallel musical features (recalling aspects of “Hemispheres”) underscore a verse for each of New York and London, including a shuffle between 3/4 and 6/8 rhythms (recalling Leonard Bernstein’s “America” from *West Side Story*) and a semitonally wavering 4/4 bridge that suggests the influence of ska. Both cities get the same chorus: “I feel the sense of possibilities. I feel the wrench of hard realities. The focus is sharp in the city.” The song ends with fading synthesizer and guitar sounds and the distant sounds of Big Ben. (Rush earlier referenced Big Ben in “Xanadu.”)

The second-last song on *Moving Pictures*, “Witch Hunt,” presents a gloomy, small-scale version of Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* (1953, see <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/crucible/>). The 1981-82 high school production of *The Crucible* in which I played Reverend Parris used this song as part of its intermission music, but English teacher John Harder did not have a problem with that, as he reminded me when I chatted with him twenty years later. The song updates Miller’s McCarthy-era “witch hunt” morality

The album's seventh and final song, "Vital Signs," provides a window into the band's willingness to incorporate technology beyond the occasional synthesized pedal point, semi-experimental song introduction, and instrumental "middle." The song also features a prominent, ska-like backbeat in many of its sections. This recalls certain elements in the same album's "The Camera Eye" and the application of a kind of reggae style in "The Spirit of Radio" (1980). Additionally, the lyrics seem to favour renewal, and the song feels like the band wrote and recorded it very quickly. For example, they did not correct Lee's substitution, presumably accidental, of the non-word "evelate" for the word "elevate" in part of the song. The song features synthesizers as rivals to the electric guitar in the song's structural and textural underpinning. Despite the frequent use of synthesizers on *Moving Pictures*, at the time Lee said: "I still don't consider myself a keyboard player—maybe a synthesist."<sup>46</sup> Rush's second live album (*Exit . . . Stage Left*, late 1981) appeared before the band completed any new studio material.<sup>47</sup> The band then continued with its enthusiasm for synthesizers and similar technology on its subsequent four studio albums (1982-87).

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tale to treat the potential ongoing strangeness of immigrants, infidels, theatre, and literature. It portrays the ignorant and self-righteous with slow, "evil-sounding" tritones (compared to the fast ones in "YYZ") and rhetorically applied, uneasy-sounding alternations among its various time signatures (compared to the smooth ones in "Limelight"). Hugh Syme also plays keyboards on this song, and the opening includes drunken, indistinct "preachy" voices. Peart wrote this song as Part 3, though the first-appearing, of a series of lyrics called "Fear." During its 1984 tour, the band played the recently completed "Fear" trilogy: "The Enemy Within," "The Weapon," and "Witch Hunt." Rush tribute bands, including one I heard in the summer of 2001, also later played them in this "reverse" order.

<sup>46</sup> Greg Quill, article-interview with "Geddy Lee/Rush," *Canadian Musician*, May 1981, 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Syme's cover includes elements of all of the preceding Rush album covers, and the album title recalls the catchphrase of Hanna-Barbera's TV cartoon character Snagglepuss, a visual representation of which would have required elaborate (and expensive) legal undertakings.

## Music Technology Assumes Control, 1982-88

From 1969 to 1981, many technologically inclined persons gravitated towards the intricacies and power of hard rock, progressive rock, and heavy metal. Rush often incorporated the technical mastery, virtuosity, formal constructedness, and metrical complexities of progressive rock. Around 1976-78, the band also gradually began to modify and extend its techniques to incorporate synthesizers and related performance technology. Judy Wajcman maintains that “new technology emerges not from sudden flashes of inspiration but from existing technology, by a process of gradual modification to, and new combinations of, that existing technology. . . . Innovation [involves] extending the scope of techniques successful in one area into new areas.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, technical complexities in certain types of rock music reflect the “male domination of skilled trades that developed under capitalism.”<sup>49</sup> In the 1980s, Rush’s application of music technology to progressive hard rock exemplified these issues. On the other hand, Canadian cultural critic Geoff Pevere rightly points out that around 1982-84 Rush “seemed torn between musical evolution and fan expectations.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Judy Wajcman, “Feminist Critiques of Science and Technology,” Chapter 1 in *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1991), 21.

<sup>49</sup> Kramarae, *Technology and Women’s Voices*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Geoff Pevere and Greig Dymond, *Mondo-Canuck: A Canadian Pop Culture Odyssey* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1996), 187.

Revealingly, Rush’s opening acts of the 1980s performed a diverse assortment of pop- and/or blues-influenced hard rock. In the early 1980s, certain of Rush’s late-1970s’ opening acts, such as Golden Earring (Dutch) and the Pat Travers Band (Canadian, blues-rock), continued to open some of the band’s concerts. However, around 1982-84 other Rush opening acts included Krokus (Swiss), Y & T (U.S.), John Butcher Axis (U.K., experimental jazz), Fastway (U.K.), Marillion (U.K., progressive rock), Nazareth (Scottish), Irish guitar-singer-songwriter Rory Gallagher, Gary Moore (formerly of Irish band Thin Lizzy), and the Canadian bands Payola\$, Red Rider, Wrabit, and others.

From 1985 to 1988, Rush’s opening acts included Marillion (U.K., progressive rock); the Canadian bands FM (synthesizer-heavy progressive rock, reunited with eccentric/anonymous co-founder Nash the Slash) and Chalk Circle (indie rock); U.S. artists such as Blue Öyster Cult (hard rock), the Fabulous

From 1976 to 1981, Rush occasionally used keyboard and foot-pedal synthesizers, but five of the six songs on *Permanent Waves* (1980) and all seven on *Moving Pictures* (1981) use some synthesizers, such as an Oberheim OB-X and a Roland JP-8 (Jupiter).<sup>51</sup> As microcomputers then began to flourish in the early 1980s, so did digital synthesizers, melodic sequencers, and electronic percussion. In that period, Rush produced its most “technological” albums: *Signals* (1982), *Grace under Pressure* (1984), *Power Windows* (1985), and *Hold Your Fire* (1987). A few of Peart’s lyrics addressed technology, but Rush’s use of certain instruments did more so.

In 1984, a Rush concert reviewer referred to Geddy Lee’s “near fortress of synthesizers.”<sup>52</sup> From 1982 to 1988, in addition to his bass guitars Lee used as many as five keyboards on stage (from among a Minimoog, Oberheim OBX-a, Roland Jupiter JP-8, PPG Wave 2.2 or 2.3 with Waveterm digital sampling unit, Emulator II, Yamaha DX-7, Roland D-50, Prophet VS, and Yamaha KX-76 controller), two pedal systems (Moog Taurus I and/or II and later a Korg MIDI unit), and two melodic and/or rhythmic sequencers (Oberheim DSX, Roland TR-808, and/or Yamaha QX-1). The filmed-on-

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Thunderbirds (blues-rock oriented), the Steve Morse Band (rock-jazz fusion), and Tommy Shaw (hard rock, formerly of Styx, soon to be of Damn Yankees and, later, of Styx again); and the European band the McAuley-Schenker Group (a.k.a. MSG, hard rock, led by former Scorpions and UFO guitarist Michael Schenker). Only a few of these opening acts suggest the continuing progressive tendencies in some of Rush’s music, although some of them fit with Rush’s increased interest in music technology. A number of Rush’s opening acts suggest the band’s interest in giving exposure to other Canadian bands.

<sup>51</sup> In 1976, Hugh Syme played an A.R.P. Odyssey synthesizer on “2112” and a Mellotron 400 on “Tears.” In 1980, he played piano on “The Spirit of Radio” and “Different Strings.” In 1977-78, Geddy Lee himself sometimes played a monophonic Minimoog synthesizer or Moog Taurus pedals for certain melodies or pedal points, and the band discarded the idea of hiring an on-stage keyboardist. Lee took piano lessons (as well as singing as a choral boy soprano) as a child in Toronto, received informal keyboard instruction for *A Farewell to Kings* (1977), and resumed piano lessons in the mid-1980s. “Hemispheres” (1978) includes Lee’s first recorded use of a polyphonic synthesizer (an Oberheim), and a related module also sometimes interfaced with a Taurus pedal unit. See also Quill, “Geddy Lee/Rush,” *Canadian Musician*, May 1981, 34-35.

<sup>52</sup> Ralph Kisiel, “Rush Proves It Outreaches Its Heavy-Metal-Band Tag,” *The Toledo Blade*, 19 Oct. 1984. See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/toledo\\_101984.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/newspapers/toledo_101984.html).

stage video for “Red Sector A” (*Grace under Pressure*, 1984) shows four synthesizers and Moog Taurus pedals on Geddy Lee’s part of the stage. (He does not play bass guitar at all during the song.) By 1987-88, Lee’s off-stage equipment *also* included as many as four synthesizers (including two Roland modules), seven samplers (Akai 900 modules), and two Yamaha QX-1 sequencers.<sup>53</sup> From 1984 to 1988, Rush also used the skills of engineers, mixers, synthesizer programmers, and/or sampler programmers such as Paul Northfield, Jim Burgess, and Andy Richards. Northfield contributed to a number of Rush and Rush-related projects from 1980 to 2002.<sup>54</sup> Burgess ran the Toronto-based music technology consulting and retail firm Saved By Technology, and Rush credited that company (in its liner notes) with technical assistance until 1993.<sup>55</sup> Session musician Andy Richards also contributed keyboard parts to certain Rush songs in 1985 and 1987.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Robert L. Doerschuk, “Geddy Lee: Rush to Perfection on ‘A Show of Hands,’” *Keyboard*, March 1989, 16-17 and Stern, “Rush,” *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988. Lee also used a U.K.-made Wal bass for *Power Windows* and during 1986 switched to using Wal basses live. Until 1992, he mainly used Wal basses, sometimes including one with a 5<sup>th</sup> string tuned to a low B. See Tolleson, *Bass Player*, Nov./Dec. 1988.

<sup>54</sup> Northfield engineered three Rush studio albums (*Permanent Waves*, 1980; *Moving Pictures*, 1981; and *Signals*, 1982) and mixed the band’s second live album (*Exit . . . Stage Left*, 1981), and he later engineered Rush’s third and fourth live albums (*A Show of Hands*, 1989 and *Different Stages*, 1998), the latter of which he co-produced with Geddy Lee. He also engineered the Neil Peart-produced projects *Burning for Buddy: A Tribute to the Music of Buddy Rich* (1994) and *Burning for Buddy: A Tribute to the Music of Buddy Rich, Vol. 2* (1997) and in 2001 co-recorded and co-produced Rush’s 2002 studio album *Vapor Trails*. From 1972 to 2002, Northfield also engineered and/or produced numerous albums by North American and European artists. See <http://allmusic.com>.

<sup>55</sup> From 1978 to 1995, Burgess mixed songs and programmed synthesizers for soul, funk, and dance albums by Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, and Queen Samantha. See also Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, 37, 78.

<sup>56</sup> From 1984 to 2000, Richards programmed and/or played keyboards on (and sometimes produced and/or mixed) numerous albums by North American and European artists.

Despite all of the technology, Lee suggested: “[Feel and melody] make a great, memorable song” and he valorized “direct communication of expression.”<sup>57</sup>

The “Red Sector A” video shows that Alex Lifeson also sometimes used Moog Taurus pedals and that he made substantial use of his Stratocaster’s whammy bar (vibrato arm) for atmospheric guitar effects inspired by recent new wave rock music. By 1985, he used a pair of bass pedal units, two off-stage Emulator II sampling keyboards, and a digital sequencer. In addition to his early-1980s effects (MXR, Delta Lab, Roland, Yamaha, etc.), he added numerous ones in 1985 (Loft, Ibanez, Boss, Scholz-Rockman, etc.)<sup>58</sup> For certain songs around 1984-88, Neil Peart wore headphones in concert so that his drumming could match the tempos of electronically generated sequences and arpeggios. He wears such headphones in the video for “Red Sector A,” which further suggests that the band wished to “play up” the hi-tech nature of its music in the 1980s.<sup>59</sup> Peart’s varied/extensive drumming approach sometimes involved Simmons electronic drums (as in 1984’s “Red Sector A,” 1985’s “Mystic Rhythms,” and others), samplers,

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<sup>57</sup> Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 61, 62.

<sup>58</sup> For his guitars, around 1982-84 he mainly favoured Fender Stratocasters and Marshall amplification, but he sometimes also used Fender Telecasters. In 1985, he often used Telecasters (with some acoustic guitars, especially Ovation Adamas) and Dean Markley amps (sometimes combined with Marshall or others). See [author unknown], article-interview with Lifeson, “Alex Lifeson: *Grace under Pressure*,” *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 44-51. Also see Jas Obrecht, article-interview, “Alex Lifeson of Rush: The Evolving Art of Rock Guitar,” *Guitar Player*, April 1986—  
<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gp0486.html>.

Around 1985, Lifeson’s guitar performance stand (which facilitates playing one guitar while another remains strapped on) became patented as the Omega Guitar Stand. In 1987, he mainly moved to Canadian-made Signature Artists guitars and to Gallien-Krueger solid-state (non-tube) pre-amps and amps. However, Signature went bankrupt and Lifeson switched mainly to PRS guitars in 1990. See John Stix, article-interview, “Alex Lifeson: The Art of Preparation,” *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, May 1991—  
<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gfpm0591.html>.

<sup>59</sup> The visual artists filmed the video for this song on a Rush concert stage (as they did for certain earlier Rush videos), but they also incorporated shots from actual concerts, including flashpot explosions and fan reactions.

and other electronic equipment. On tour he combined his 1982 Tama Artstar prototype drums (plus Avedis Zildjian cymbals, etc.) with a satellite set largely involving electronics. In this period, Peart and his drum technicians began to place his drums on a rotating platform so he could face forward in any of several configurations. (He used similar platform technology for his 2002 drum solo.) In 1987-88, he replaced his glockenspiel with a KAT electronic MIDI mallet unit. He also used dedicated Akai sampling modules and various additional electronic triggers.<sup>60</sup>

### “Subdivisions” (*Signals*, 1982)<sup>61</sup>

The opening track of Rush’s *Signals* (1982), “Subdivisions,” begins with the first of several brassy synthesizer patterns that underlie nearly the entire song. No earlier Rush song used a synthesizer to this extent (72%, including two “solos”), and Lifeson’s guitar, although almost always present, can barely be heard apart from a brief solo (4:18-4:39) that follows the second synthesizer solo (3:57-4:18) in interrupting the second chorus. Thus, the song contains nearly as much synthesizer “airtime” as all of Rush’s

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<sup>60</sup> Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 65, 86. See also the Rush Backstage Club newsletter, March 1990. From 1984 to 1986, Peart’s Tama bass drum heads featured a “G under P” logo from the cover of *Grace under Pressure* (1984), replacing the long-used man-against-star logo of *2112* (1976). In 1987, Peart replaced his central red Tama set with a white custom Ludwig Super Classic set, with the bass drum heads featuring graphics from the cover of *Hold Your Fire* (1987).

<sup>61</sup> Hugh Syme’s cover for *Signals* shows a Dalmatian sniffing a red fire hydrant. This implies fire services at one level but the dog’s basic physiological needs at another. (The hydrant “signals” the dog to urinate on it.) The pristine lawn reflects a well-maintained suburban yard. The back cover shows a fictitious subdivision with Rush-related names, such as Olde Dirk Road, Lerxtwood Mall, and a firm named Pratt & Associates (based on Lee, Lifeson, and Peart’s band nicknames, respectively). The neighbourhood also includes a baseball joke, Line Drive, based on Geddy Lee’s appreciation for that sport. The songs “Subdivisions” and “The Analog Kid” presumably inspired the suburban imagery.

The band again recorded the album at Le Studio in Quebec, co-producing it with Terry Brown and recording it with engineer Paul Northfield. *Kerrang!* listed *Signals* at #4 on its 1982 Top 10 end-of-year list.

In 1983, Alex Lifeson won Best Rock Talent in *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*.

previous work combined. Not surprisingly, Lee wrote the song on keyboards, and he especially refers to the wide frequency range and “organic punch” of the Roland analog (JP-8 Jupiter) synthesizer he used.<sup>62</sup> This direction resulted in the Lee’s own historiographical confusion over this album, calling it “definitely the direction that we’ve wanted to go” in 1982, “confusing” in 1984, and “a failure in getting the right balance” in 1991.<sup>63</sup> The later comments suggest that Lee wished to apologize for the shortcomings of *Signals*, especially the analog synthesizer “punch” that often buried Lifeson’s guitar. (Although continuing to explore music technology, the band successfully redressed that balance between 1984 and 1987). Lee’s comment from 1982 suggests that the band thought of its recent music as comparatively accessible and that “big points” (1970s-style individualism, etc.) and “weird times” (e.g., complex metrical constructions) no longer mattered. On the other hand, “Subdivisions” still addresses relatively serious issues, and in addition to 4/4 it makes substantial use of 3/4 time (i.e., in the chorus and chorus-derived ending) as well as 7/8 (especially for narrative applications during the verses).

Despite the song’s extensive engagement with synthesizer technology, the lyrics of “Subdivisions” do *not* address technology. The song describes the desire of restless young persons, especially “dreamers and misfits,” to escape from suburbia, which “sprawl[s] on the fringes of the city . . . in between the bright lights and the far unlit unknown.” Shortly after the album’s release, Peart said:

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<sup>62</sup> Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 56, 60.

<sup>63</sup> Pete Makowski, article-interview with Rush, “Adrenalin Rush,” *Sounds*, 18 Dec. 1982. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/snds1282.html>. Derek Oliver, article-interview with Lee, “Rush Release,” *Melody Maker*, 5 May 1984, 12. Schulte, “Rush: Straight from the Heart,” *Canadian Musician* 13.5, October 1991, 36.



I guess that *Signals* has more to do with writing about people and less about ideals. . . . I'm trying to make . . . symbols into real people and real conflicts in real people's lives. I still want to write about ideals. I'm not interested in writing about the sewer of life.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, *Signals* often concerns various types of communication. Around this time, sympathetic critics and reviewers noticed a change in Rush's philosophical tone. One concert reviewer recognized that "Subdivisions" and "The Analog Kid" (the album's second song) elicited a "wildly passionate response of cultural identification from the teenage crowd" and that "Rush articulates the seething emotional restlessness of its suburban constituency with penetrating accuracy."<sup>65</sup> The "Subdivisions" video portrays a solitary, male teenager playing video games, wandering around the downtown area of a large city (Toronto), enduring the ridicule of cooler students, and, intertextually, watching a video of Rush performing this song just as an annoyed parent tosses him his homework. Peart's lyrics, however, acknowledge the irony that the ones who escape from the suburbs and head for the city often long for the suburbs later in life—"somewhere to relax their restless flight, somewhere out of a memory of lighted streets on quiet nights."<sup>66</sup>

"Subdivisions" partly conforms to Rush's trademark "progressive" 7/8 time signature, as in the beginning of the song's introduction. Also, the middle portion of each half-verse switches from 4/4 to 7/8 (0:58-1:10, 1:20-1:32, 2:51-3:03, and 3:12-3:24). This underscores lyrics about the suburbs' "geometric order, [functioning as] an insulated

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Makowski, "Adrenalin Rush," *Sounds*, 18 Dec. 1982.

<sup>65</sup> 'Rich,' concert review of Rush, Madison Square Garden, New York, *Variety*, 15 Dec. 1982, 74.

<sup>66</sup> Dave Bidini of the Rheostatics discusses his Etobicoke (Toronto suburb) engagement with Rush's early music in "Rock 'N' Roll Memoirs: The sweet Rush of adolescence—How the ultimate local rockers became a high school obsession," *Toronto Star*, Sunday, January 6, 2002, D4.

border in between [city and country]”, with its “[o]pinions all provided . . . the future pre-decided . . . detached and subdivided.” Later, the same metrical shift inscribes the cities’ “timeless old attraction,” with individuals “cruising for the action” and “lit up like a firefly” at night, but losing “the race to rats,” getting “caught in ticking traps,” and, ironically, starting to dream of the suburbs. (The parallel recalls the band’s use of identical music to represent Apollo and Dionysus in 1978’s “Hemispheres” and London and New York in 1981’s “The Camera Eye.”) The song’s title references the suburban subdivisions with which the song concerns itself lyrically (and in the video), but it also references the metrical subdivisions that musically underscore Verse 1’s dislike of the suburbs *and* Verse 2’s ambivalence about having left them. In beginning to use music technology so extensively, Lee probably recognized an ironic parallel of Peart’s urban “ticking traps.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> “The Analog Kid” (second) features a lyrical theme somewhat similar to that of “Subdivisions.” Lifeson’s guitar plays a more prominent role, and the song inscribes a fast, backbeat-driven 4/4. This slows to cut-time for the chorus and solo sections. In the chorus, a voice-like synthesizer patch provides a “bright and nameless vision[’s] . . . call” of places and experiences other than those of one’s small town or suburban home. Peart later pointed to “The Analog Kid” as his “first attempt at non-fiction” and suggested that by 1982 he had sufficient “confidence and technique” to “step outside” of his characters instead of “stepping inside” them. Nick Krewen, article-interview with Neil Peart, “Rush: Presto change-o,” *Canadian Musician* 12.2, April 1990, 37.

The third song, “Chemistry,” mainly follows a dance-like moderate 4/4, but with numerous textural shifts. Most of the song’s instrumental sections use polyphonic synthesizer chords, active drums, occasionally circular guitar gestures, and, often, Moog Taurus pedals instead of bass guitar. Lee reports that he wrote this song on keyboards. Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 60. The “synth-pop” chorus features a voice-like monophonic synthesizer line, active drums, somewhat active bass, and, apart from a solo, considerably less guitar than in the keyboard-less, hard rock verses. The song’s lyrics (credited to all three band members) and its textural shifts explore the band’s chemistry in combining electricity (e.g., synthesizers) and biology (e.g., traditional rock music instruments).

“Digital Man” (fourth) ironically makes comparatively little use of synthesizers. The verses use power chords with virtuosic drums and bass and suggest that the central character functions as a futuristic information collector. The bridge uses reggae-influenced backbeats and textural/chorused rhythm-and-blues guitar and sees the protagonist wishing to retire from “Babylon” to a tropical island: “Zion” or “Avalon.” (Those references suggest further Jamaican influences.) The brief chorus section uses a prominent synthesizer part: a thumpy, mechanical, bass guitar replacement. This reveals that the digital man “won’t need a bed” because he is an android. The character is also said to be “adept at adaptation.”

The fifth song, “The Weapon,” begins by paraphrasing U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1933

### “New World Man” (*Signals*, 1982)

Rush wrote and recorded its only U.S. Top 40 hit, “New World Man” (#21), in a few hours, and Geddy Lee explains that the band members “were all in the mood to put something down that was real spontaneous.”<sup>68</sup> Revealingly, the song avoids “progressive hard rock” features, including: odd metres, a guitar solo, and elaborate instrumental (e.g., unison) sections. It appears sixth (second on the second half of *Signals*) and begins with a simple, diatonic, synth-pop synthesizer pattern. The timbre changes (i.e., flanges) slightly on each of the pattern’s consecutive eighth-notes, and the pattern also underlies the song’s verses, but at a much more subtle volume level. Interlocking drum, bass, and guitar patterns join in and accompany the song’s first verse. The first part of the lyrics concerns a “restless young romantic,” “a rebel and a runner” who “wants to run the big machine.” Relatively active drums and bass, reggae-influenced (backbeat) guitar chords, and a slow-moving synthesizer line (incorporating filter sweeps) accompany the bridge, which espouses the combination of “old world” and “third world” tendencies. Not surprisingly, the song combines 1970s’ British rock with 1980s’ “world beat” rhythmic influences. The chorus then establishes a hard rock/guitar-based riff. This suggests that Rush wished to make its “own mistakes” and to accept that “constant change is here

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comment about socio-economic fear in the era of the Great Depression: “We’ve got nothing to fear but fear itself.” Peart transforms the declarative statement into a rhetorical question in order to address its renewed (or continuing) relevance, and he follows this with several similar constructions:

We’ve got nothing to fear – but fear itself? Not pain or failure, not fatal tragedy?

Not the faulty units in this mad machinery? Not the broken contacts in emotional chemistry?

Peart wrote the song’s lyrics as Part 2 of “Fear,” and he addresses his ideological fear that so many of his fellow humans let religious movements and governments keep them in a blissful ignorance. “Fear” continues with “The Enemy Within” (Part 1, 1984) and “Freeze” (Part 4, 2002). Lee wrote this song on keyboards, and he used an electronic arpeggiator for some of its hypnotic synthesizer elements. Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 60, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Steve Gett, *Success under Pressure* (Cherry Lane Books, 1984). Out of print.

today.”<sup>69</sup> The end of each chorus provides the earliest instances (after Rush’s 1973 single) of Lee providing his own vocal harmonies, something he gradually increased over the following two decades—culminating in his solo album (*My Favourite Headache*, 2000) and Rush’s seventeenth studio album (*Vapor Trails*, 2002).

### “Countdown” (*Signals*, 1982)

The eighth and final song on *Signals*, “Countdown,” uncharacteristically bridges the band’s enthusiasm for general technology with its use of music technology. Like “Subdivisions,” the song contains a high degree of synthesizers; like “New World Man,” it includes no guitar solo. The song recounts the band’s attendance as V.I.P. guests at NASA’s inaugural space shuttle (Columbia) launch on April 12, 1981. Ayn Rand similarly attended the 1969 Apollo 11 launch as a V.I.P. guest and similarly enthused about that event as evidence of man’s “grandeur:”

One knew that this spectacle was not the product of inanimate nature, like some aurora borealis, or of chance, or of luck, that it was unmistakably human—with “human,” for once, meaning grandeur—that a purpose and a long, sustained, disciplined effort had gone to achieve this series of moments, and that man was succeeding. For once, if only for seven minutes, the worst among those who saw it had to feel—not “How small is man by the side of the Grand Canyon!”—but “How great is man and how safe is nature when he conquers it!”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The seventh (second-last) song, “Losing It,” tells the stories of aging artists steeped in self-doubt: a dancer and a writer modelled on Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961, Nobel Prize in Literature 1954). As Peart explains: “As a writer Hemingway thought that the most important thing was to sustain a reputation and integrity. Hopefully, all of the other fruits would follow from that. And for us as a band, myself as a musician, that was the idealistic goal with which we started out.” Nick Krewen, article-interview with Peart, “Surviving with Rush: Drummer-lyricist Neil Peart looks forward,” *The Canadian Composer*, April 1986, 8. In the song and in interviews, Peart avoids specific information about Hemingway’s actual outcome: suicide by shotgun after undergoing a series of electro-shock treatments for clinical depression and other ailments. Nevertheless, the song inscribes melancholy. Ben Mink’s guest contributions on electric violin provide an emotional depth that inspired the band to pursue similar real-life topics between 1984 and 2002. Hemingway surfaces a number of times in a number of different ways in Rush’s music as well as in Peart’s “extracurricular” interests in physical challenges (e.g., cycling).

<sup>70</sup> Ayn Rand, “Apollo 11” in *The Objectivist* 8.9 (Sept. 1969), 6.

In the same article, Rand complains about “humanities”/“collectivist” intellectuals and about media commentators. Most such persons either didn’t care about the “rationalist triumph” of Apollo 11 or else made it clear that earth-bound social issues should have been the priority of the day.<sup>71</sup> In fact, Rand held that the U.S. government should not have spent so much money on an enormous project that would have come about through laissez-faire principles of capitalism.<sup>72</sup> In a slightly later article, she contrasts the successful Apollo 11 mission with the August 1969 Woodstock rock festival, which she overwhelmingly disdains, suggesting that Apollonian rationalism (Apollo 11) must triumph over Dionysian collectivism (Woodstock).<sup>73</sup> By comparison, both Friedrich Nietzsche (who originated the Apollo/Dionysus “split” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872) and Neil Peart (e.g., in “Hemispheres,” 1978) favour a more balanced approach. Moreover, Rush’s “Natural Science” (*Permanent Waves*, 1980) demonstrates an ambivalence about conquering science and nature that Rand would not have appreciated: “Science, like nature, must also be tamed.”<sup>74</sup>

“Countdown” uses brassy synthesizer patterns that recall the album’s opening song, “Subdivisions.” It also uses numerous tape-recorded samples of the actual Columbia launch activities, including the sounds of helicopters, the voices of mission control, the Columbia astronauts, and the launch itself. Peart bases much of his percussion on snare drum rolls, thus sounding “military.” The music builds through an

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<sup>71</sup> Rand, “Apollo 11,” *The Objectivist* 8.9, 10-12.

<sup>72</sup> Rand, “Apollo 11,” *The Objectivist* 8.9, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Rand, “Apollo and Dionysus” in *The Objectivist* 8.12 (Dec. 1969), 1-9 and 9.1 (Jan. 1970), 1-9. Rand died in 1982, the year of Rush’s album *Signals* (and its song “Countdown”).

<sup>74</sup> At the end of its 28th mission (February 1, 2003), Columbia broke up over Texas, killing its crew of seven. Another shuttle mishap involved the explosion of Challenger shortly after its launch on January 28, 1986. Otherwise, from 1981 to 2002 NASA successfully completed 111 shuttle missions.

overall accretionary effect in order to underscore the excitement of such an occasion. At certain points among the audio samples of the narrative—i.e., launch ignition and leaving Earth’s atmosphere—the rhythms alternate among 6/4 and 7/8 (2:54-3:09 and, for the fadeout, 5:00-5:50). This adds to the excitement of this “leading edge” application of technology. Lifeson says of the metrical complexities:

It’s more of a feel thing than a conscious effort. The way we write, we have the lyric or an idea of what the song is going to be. That idea sets a mood. By changing the time signature you can change the whole effect of the song.<sup>75</sup>

The song’s “feel” or “effect”—excitement, danger—hinges on those changes. Music must have been played at some point surrounding the launch, because we hear mission control and the astronauts (Young and Crippen) expressing their appreciation for it near the end of the song. Possibly, Rush provided its NASA V.I.P. acquaintances with recordings of some of its earlier music, but in any case only a few later Rush songs integrate general technology and music technology as closely as “Countdown.”

### **“Distant Early Warning” (*Grace under Pressure*, 1984)**

In a controversial move, Rush abandoned its long-time associate Terry (“Broom”) Brown and engaged former Supertramp producer Peter Henderson to co-produce its 1984 album, *Grace under Pressure*.<sup>76</sup> The band wanted a change, but its desire for a renewed

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<sup>75</sup> [Author unknown.] Review-interview, “Alex Lifeson: *Grace under Pressure*,” *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 44-51.

<sup>76</sup> Before Henderson, the band sought recent U2 and Peter Gabriel producer Steve Lillywhite. They gave Henderson the pseudo-mythological band nickname: “Hentor,” based on his scrawled signature. Despite the band’s change in co-producer, Rush again record at Le Studio in Quebec.

The internationally renowned, Canadian portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh (1908-2002) took the band’s photo for this album. Most famous for his World War II photograph of a grumpy Winston Churchill, Karsh had never before photographed a rock band.

balance in technology and co-production resulted in a difficult recording period. The band took three months to write the album and five months to record it, again at Le Studio in Quebec. The recording of the vocal tracks for the opening song, “Distant Early Warning,” alone took ten hours to complete.<sup>77</sup> The album title, its inner photo of an egg precariously lodged in a C-clamp, and Hugh Syme’s cover art (see Figure 4.3) reflect the stylistic difficulties of this period.

**Figure 4.3: Album Cover of *Grace under Pressure* (H. Syme, Mercury/Anthem, 1984)**



On the album cover, an android observes a circuit board (?) suspended between ominous storm clouds (pressure, abbreviated “p”) and a shimmering oceanic liquid (grace or “g”).

Bill Martin suggests that *Grace under Pressure* “offers a viable direction for post-progressive music.”<sup>78</sup> By comparison, the *All-Music Guide to Rock* finds the album

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<sup>77</sup> See Banasiewicz, *Rush Visions*, 78.

<sup>78</sup> Bill Martin, *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock, 1968-1978* (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 271.

“sterile techno-crap.”<sup>79</sup> That negative assessment may stem in part from Rush’s high-concept music video for the album’s opening song, “Distant Early Warning.” Directed by David Mallet and filmed in front of a stylized map of the world, it borrows from Stanley Kubrick’s film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). The song and video update the context from the earlier days of the Cold War to the height of the conservative era (Thatcher, Reagan, etc.) of exactly twenty years later. The imagery includes flight control instrument panels, a bomber jet, a melting wax mock-up of Geddy Lee’s face, and a young boy “riding” the bomb over nature and cities.<sup>80</sup> The set aesthetic presents a somewhat hi-tech vision: Lee plays a hi-tech/compact Steinberger bass (and wrote the song on a keyboard) and Peart’s Simmons electronic drums appear prominently (although he mainly uses his red acoustic Tama set in this song). Peart had earlier rejected electronic drums as insufficiently visceral but by 1984 had changed his mind.

The song’s instrumental introduction includes the sounds of static, suggesting radiation or perhaps a Geiger counter measuring it. Peart’s opening words support an interpretation involving a concern for nature about the threat of nuclear annihilation: “There’s no swimming in the heavy water, no singing in the acid rain.” However, he also incorporates the difficulty of human relationships and puns on obsolete, absolute, and Absalom. This last word simultaneously references the title of William Faulkner’s novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and the biblical story of King David’s grief over the death of his son Absalom. In part of his solo (3:15-3:28), Lifeson uses a Delta Lab

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<sup>79</sup> Rick Clark, “Rush,” the *All-Music Guide to Rock* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman, 1995), 667.

<sup>80</sup> The boy is probably *not* Geddy Lee’s son Julian Weinrib. A Julian Weinrib of the right age later attended the University of Toronto as an Arts and Science major (class of 2003) and served as a starting pitcher for the Varsity Blues in Geddy Lee’s (i.e., Gary Lee Weinrib’s) favourite sport.



Harmoniccomputer to play in octaves.<sup>81</sup> The band plays the song's main instrumental hook (initially at 0:28-0:39) in 7/8 with some 5/8. Lee uses keyboards and bass pedals for that section. In addition to stressing the asymmetrical rhythms, the main hook also seems to wish to force D mixolydian (F#s but not C#s) even though the verses favour A minor and the chorus favours D *dorian* (no accidentals). By pairing the "old Rush" rhythms with Lee's "new Rush" synthesizers, the sharp-side here suggests an enthusiasm for technology. By avoiding the F#s, the verses and the chorus suggest a comparatively pessimistic view concerning the survival both of nature and of human relationships in a complex world.

Lee also wrote the album's second song, "Afterimage," on keyboards.<sup>82</sup> He wrote the bass line of its eighth (and last) song, "Between the Wheels," with his left hand on a keyboard instead of on a bass guitar or bass pedals. Lee explained his self-conscious view of himself as a "keyboardist" in *Keyboard* magazine: "My actual ability on keyboards is somewhat limited, and I don't consider myself a keyboard player."<sup>83</sup> Lee first incorporated synthesizer melodies in 1977, but by 1982-84 he composed a number of

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<sup>81</sup> [Author unknown], "Alex Lifeson: *Grace under Pressure*," *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 46, 49.

<sup>82</sup> "Afterimage" can't quite decide if it wants to remember happier times with a deceased friend or mourn his loss. Peart's lyrics concern a friend and band-related colleague, Robbie Whelan, who died in a car accident. (The band dedicated the album "In memory of Robbie Whelan.") "Afterimage" refers to the mental effect of still seeing something even though it no longer remains in your field of vision. By choosing this title, Peart reasonably suggests that this parallels remembering a friend, and Lee reports that Peart completed the lyrics before any of the music was written (which was quite unusual for Rush). See Armbruster, "Geddy Lee of Rush," *Keyboard*, September 1984, 63. The song's verses inscribe A natural minor and almost "snappy" rhythms, but the choruses sound comparatively negative and inscribe more complex chords, slower/resigned rhythms, and a kind of blues-inspired call-and-response. The song ends in a tonally negative-sounding "flat side."

Peart's daughter Selena Taylor died in a car crash in 1997 and Peart's wife Jacqueline Taylor died of cancer in 1998, and the band dedicated its 1998 live album, *Different Stages*, "In loving memory of Jackie and Selena" and also included in the liner notes the opening lines of "Afterimage:" "Suddenly . . . you were gone . . . from all the lives you left your mark upon."

<sup>83</sup> Armbruster, "Geddy Lee of Rush," *Keyboard*, September 1984, 63-65.

new songs *entirely* on keyboards. In the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, the band used a wide variety of technology on stage. The band members played, or at least triggered, virtually all keyboard and sequencer passages. Paul Théberge points to H. Stith Bennett's discussion of the disparity between recorded music and its live performance.<sup>84</sup> By introducing bass pedal units, synthesizers, sequencers, arpeggiators, triggers, and samplers within its live performances between 1977 and 1988, Rush acknowledged this potential disparity. The band chose to recreate its studio creations through a meticulous, noticeable application of such technology. Later, the band concerned itself less with this disparity. In 2002 Lee included only two keyboards on stage, and he rarely played them. When the band played keyboard-heavy music from 1982-87, it allowed off-stage computers and samplers to play most of those sounds. Lee focused mainly on bass and vocals. Lifeson played guitar and occasionally sang, even though Lee sang nearly all of the vocal overdubs (1984-2002) on the original recordings.

Lifeson worked on his guitar solos for "Afterimage," "Between the Wheels," and "Red Sector A" (the third song) apart from the rest of the songwriting process. He accomplished this mainly in his spare time at his home studio. He worked from basic early cassette demos of those songs made at Le Studio. Lifeson explains his mid-1980s' view on fast playing and his preference for composed-out guitar solos:

[A] whole Van Halen record of faster-than-lightning guitar playing is too much. ... [T]he most soul-wrenching kind of note, harmonic, or melodic solo passage that really moves and feels—that lives forever. ... I always remember how I felt when I went to see bands and the guitar player didn't play the same solo that he did on the record. I'd be going, 'This is one of my favorite solos of all time. The guy's a bum!' ... We do a lot of composites—taking bits of solos and putting them together. Then I relearn it, or if it slides in nicely from one section to the next, we keep it.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, 109 and Bennett, "Notation and Identity in Contemporary Popular Music," *Popular Music*, 3 (1983), 231.

<sup>85</sup> "Alex Lifeson: *Grace Under Pressure*," *Guitar Player*, August 1984, 44-51. Regarding James

Lifeson disparages the flashy fastness and improvised live solos of other rock guitarists. Peart's move towards more emotional lyrics about nature, human nature, and other "real world" topics largely explains Lifeson's desire for soul-wrenching guitar contributions that move or feel. He also indicates that he composed his mid-1980s' guitar solos in much the same manner as the band composed its earlier extended works: putting separate bits together. Throughout the album, he uses a heavily chorused guitar sound and relatively spare chords and/or arpeggios. This resembles the playing of other 1980s' guitarists, especially U2's the Edge.

#### **"Red Sector A" (*Grace under Pressure*, 1984)**

Peart named the album's third song, "Red Sector A," after the shuttle launch area the band visited for NASA's shuttle launch in the spring of 1981, which also inspired Rush's 1982 song "Countdown." However, the lyrics of "Red Sector A" actually concern a wartime, concentration camp scenario in which a young man has lost his father and brother and hopes that he can rise to the challenge of seeing his mother through the rest of the ordeal. This originated in Peart reading the accounts of war survivors, but he frames the lyrics just generically enough that they can refer to the prisoners of any war and also to slavery. Lee's parents survived the concentration camps at Auschwitz, and Peart may have wished to write something more personal for Lee to sing.

Peart's drumming, which never pauses, suggests dance-pop and features metronomic closed hi-hat eighth-notes, disorienting open hi-hat and other sounds, and, 43% of the time, at least some of the sounds (especially tom-tom fills), on Simmons electronic drums. Lifeson uses a whammy bar to make the song's opening chords seem

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Brown's *supposed* improvisations, see Frith, "Art versus Technology," 269.

somehow ungrounded, and one of the earliest portions of his guitar solo (ca 3:09-3:18) provides exotic-sounding sevenths by means of electronically derived harmonics generated on a Harmonicomputer. These provide familiar-yet-exotic sentiments to parallel Peart's lyrics. Lee uses an electronic arpeggiator for some of the more hypnotic synthesizer elements.<sup>86</sup> Most revealing, though, Lee does not play a bass guitar at any point during this song, not even for the short periods when he does not play keyboards and not for the song's filmed-on-stage video. Thus, synthesized elements participate without pause. Also, the song remains in 4/4 time, and it contains no overt "progressive" melodic/rhythmic unison or contrapuntal passages.<sup>87</sup>

#### **"The Body Electric" (*Grace under Pressure*, 1984)**

"I Sing the Body Electric" (*Leaves of Grass*, 1855) by Walt Whitman (1819-92) involves a wide-eyed enthusiasm for the physiology of the human body, and Neil Peart used this as his lyrical starting point for "The Body Electric," the fifth song on *Grace under Pressure*.<sup>88</sup> However, the song more closely recalls *Star Wars* creator George Lucas's early film *THX-1138* (1971), with lyrics referring to a "humanoid escapee," an

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<sup>86</sup> See Armbruster, "Geddy Lee of Rush," *Keyboard*, September 1984, 64.

<sup>87</sup> Peart wrote the lyrics for fourth song, "The Enemy Within," as Part 1 of "Fear." He wrote the three song lyrics in reverse order, becoming the most personal by Part 1. This recalls Richard Wagner's reverse order librettos for his *Ring* cycle. This instalment involves a psychological fear of things outside resulting in keeping one's ambition bottled up inside. (An unanticipated Part 4, "Freeze," appeared in 2002.) The tempo holds back slightly and the rhythms seem inspired by ska in the verses, with Lifeson providing slower off-beat chords. The chorus and the bridge use hard rock style, but the post-chorus instrumental section, after the words "experience to extremes," uses an airy synth-pop sound. The song begins with the hard rock style, before establishing the ska verse. By comparison, the song ends with ska, but with hard rock rhythms *and* keyboards.

<sup>88</sup> See <http://www.bartleby.com/142/19.html> for the text of Whitman's poem. The U.S. jazz-rock fusion band Weather Report named its 1971 album after Whitman's poem title. (Rush often cited Weather Report as one of its many musical influences.)

“android on the run . . . trying to change its program.” The song later expands the computer imagery with references to “data overload,” “memory banks unloading . . . bytes break[ing] into bits,” and, especially, to the binary code sung during the chorus (though already implied in the song’s main drum pattern): “1-0-0-1-0-0-1.” The paranoid and panicky situation of the song’s lyrics recall the film through words such as: “S.O.S.,” “in distress,” “trouble,” “break down,” “struggle,” “resist,” “a pulse of dying power,” “a hundred years of routines,” and “pray[ing] to the mother of all machines.” The song’s music video also uses THX-1138 imagery, combined with Plato’s less-technological cave.

The song’s rhythms remain suitably off-kilter and avoid the obvious 4/4 downbeats. The tempo remains quite fast, which is particularly odd given the deliberately dour pacing of Lucas’s film. After the initial drums/bass/guitar groove, Lee uses synthesizers in 72% of the song, although often simultaneously with bass guitar. These often provide voice-like or “crystalline” timbres, via a recently acquired PPG digital synthesizer, sometimes played via a melodic sequencer or (probably sometimes) via foot-pedals. The keyboard parts support the central rhythms up into the higher frequencies, which also corrects one of the most common complaints about *Signals* (1982): that the keyboard-oriented songs on that album often diminished, or at least substantially veiled, the band’s traditional instrumental interplay. Moreover, the song’s guitar solo features *only* guitar, bass, and drums, in a highly contrapuntal (“traditional Rush”) texture. Overcoming these sorts of “balance challenges” resulted in the album’s title: *Grace under Pressure*, which derives from the definition of “guts” that Ernest Hemingway provided to Dorothy Parker in an interview in 1929.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with Dorothy Parker, *The New Yorker*, 30 November 1929. See

## Musical Influences on Rush, ca 1984-88

In a 1986 interview, Neil Peart mentioned growing up listening to big band music and becoming inspired by the drummers who played with Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Frank Sinatra, and Tony Bennett. He pointed to the influence of Gene Krupa as well as to recent jazz “that deals more with the thrust and organization of rock,” such as Weather Report and jazz-fusion drummers Alex Acuña, Bill Bruford (also

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<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap7/hemingway.html#grace>.

The album’s sixth song, “Kid Gloves,” begins with a delay-effected guitar, weak (inverted) chords, subtle drums, and a basic keyboard line, which continue into Verse 1. The lyrics mention being overwhelmed and out-of-touch, which is also inscribed by the verses’ 5/4 time signature, the music’s gentle resignation, and Lee’s lower singing range (musical “kid gloves”?). The bridge switches quite drastically to 4/4, power chords, no synthesizer, slightly higher vocals, and lyrics about frustration and anger. The end of bridge 2, on the words “tough to be so cool” (and additionally, on its reprise) provides an early instance (following “New World Man” and “Distant Early Warning”) of Lee providing his own vocal harmonies. The instrumental section mostly comprises Lifeson’s guitar solo, including a modest, inventive combination of whammy bar effects, harmonics, off-beat gestures, and strange parallel harmonies.

The seventh song, “Red Lenses,” somewhat returns to the late-Cold-War and nature themes of “Distant Early Warning.” Peart puns on “red” and “read” (past tense) thus implicating the media in hyping only selected things about international relations and other issues of the day. The song implicates the semi-fictional *National Midnight Star*, in turning people into what they believe (trash?). Ironically, the *National Midnight Star*, which for several years served as the premier Rush discussion group (and related website), degenerated into just such tabloid-like trash by the late 1990s. The song’s lyrics vaguely address the disparity of global wealth vs. poverty, and Peart uses a wide variety of red-related images (“red lenses”) throughout the song. These include heartbeats, rising sun, battle, passion, Mars, dancing shoes, the Soviet Union, heat, and pain. The song’s extremes in vocal range, tonality, and music technology underscore its view that the apparent black-and-white extremes within culture merely reinforce one other.

The eighth and final song, “Between the Wheels,” builds largely upon Lee’s brassy, off-beat two-chord synthesizer riff: C/F/B (suspended tritone above F, in second inversion) “resolving” to C/E/A (A minor in first inversion). Its harsh/unstable nature inspired the song’s lyrics, with verses about living “between a rock and a hard place” with culture (TV, war, uneasy streets, “real time,” etc.) making us dizzy, but its simplicity also gave Lifeson ample opportunity to contribute guitar parts. The bridge aborts the keyboards, and Lee’s active bass and Peart’s active drumming contrast Lifeson’s atmospheric guitar chords. Those lyrics describe speeding through life, using the imagery of driving a fast car and the wheels of time. Lee switches back to keyboards and bass pedals for the chorus, which clarifies the disparity between the mobility of “wheels” and the potential self-destructiveness of letting fast-moving time get the better of you. The lyrics of the chorus reference not only the “Star-Spangled Banner” and the 1932, Depression-era Bing Crosby hit “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” but also Ernest Hemingway’s 1926 use of the phrase “lost generation” in *The Sun Also Rises* and T. S. Eliot’s 1922 poem “The Wasteland. The song comments on the precarious Western world and transplants post-World War I/Depression-era ideas about moral loss and cultural aimlessness to the Cold War era. Like Eliot, Peart references earlier historical and literary contexts, but Peart’s involve the period of the early careers of Hemingway and Eliot.

sometimes a member of Yes, King Crimson, and other progressive rock bands), Peter Erskine, Omar Hakim, and Simon Phillips. He also revealed his appreciation for rock drummers such as Warren Cann (Ultravox), Phil Collins and Jerry Marotta (e.g., with Peter Gabriel), Stewart Copeland (the Police), Steve Jansen (the group Japan), Rod Morgenstein (Dixie Dregs), Andy Newmark, and Chris Sharrock (Icicle Works) and for reggae, juju (King Sunny Ade), and other world music.<sup>90</sup> He also spoke highly of non-drummers who have a good rhythmic sense:

Even a non-drummer like Thomas Dolby, for instance, uses a lot of electronic drums and drum machines, but as a musician, he has a great sense of rhythm. As a drummer, I find it satisfying to listen to. Peter Gabriel is another example of that. He's not a drummer, but he has a great sense of rhythm—what rhythm is and what it can do. Consequently, his music is very influential to me, even though he uses a number of different drummers and sometimes just drum machines. He has the ability to make it all have rhythmic integrity, which is difficult . . .<sup>91</sup>

In 1986, Peart discussed how Rush's music, progressed from being "progressive:"

We think that the face of our music is changing from having been progressive to not being progressive. For us, we're progressing. That's all that progressive music can be, and it's just as difficult for us to think of and to play. To us, it's totally satisfying and progressive. Perhaps from the view of an outsider who judges only on the superficiality of technique, it might seem simpler. Believe me, it's not.<sup>92</sup>

Peart's childhood piano lessons probably explain his predilection for melodic percussion (e.g., chimes, glockenspiels, marimbas, and, later, MIDI- and/or sample-based instruments) as well as his ongoing interest in jazz drumming.

In a 1984 interview, Geddy Lee referred to inspiration from the Fixx, Tears for Fears, Peter Gabriel (including synthesist Larry Fast and various drummers), Simple Minds, Ultravox, Talk Talk, Eurythmics, King Sunny Ade, Howard Jones, and King

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<sup>90</sup> See Scott K. Fish, article-interview with Peart, "Neil Peart," *Modern Drummer*, January 1986—<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0186.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Crimson (i.e., its recent album *Three of a Perfect Pair*). Much of this music makes prominent “post-progressive” use of synthesizers. Lee disdained the use by certain performers of remote (strap-on) keyboards as “too Vegas.”<sup>93</sup> In the mid-1980s, Lifeson mentioned his appreciation for the album *Win This Record* (1982) by the extremely eclectic California musician David Lindley (bluegrass, world beat, blues, rock ‘n’ roll, etc.). Also, Lifeson’s non-solo guitar contributions in Rush’s music from 1984-85 often resemble richly chorused, offbeat, horn/brass sections in a jazz or rhythm-and-blues band, thus also requiring an unusually broad definition of “progressive” to circumscribe Rush’s music and influences.

### ***Power Windows, 1985***

Starting with *Power Windows*, Rush achieved a renewed level of comfort in producing its music along with an outside co-producer. For its two 1985-87 albums, the band also recorded mainly in the U.K. (plus Montserrat and partly in Toronto) after five years recording at Le Studio near Morin Heights, Quebec. Rush worked with U.K. co-producer Peter Collins on studio albums released in 1985, 1987, 1994, and 1996. Lee explains: “The main reason we chose [Collins] is because he’s a good song producer. He’s not hung up on technical stuff—he focuses on the song.”<sup>94</sup> Collins’ background included writing and producing jingles as well as producing techno-pop recordings. His production associates would hardly have dissuaded Rush’s use of hi-tech equipment in

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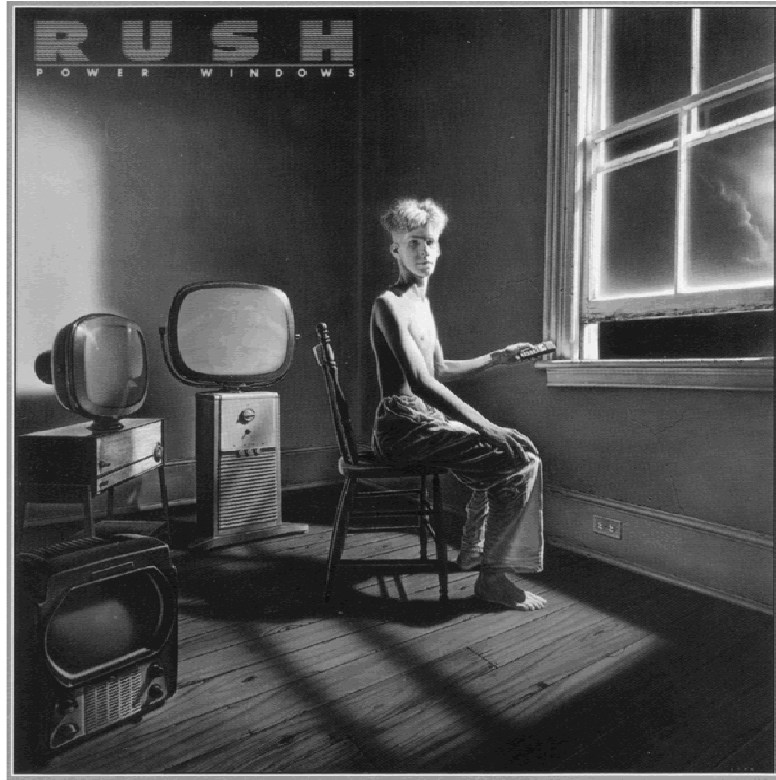
<sup>93</sup> Armbruster, “Geddy Lee of Rush,” *Keyboard*, September 1984, 60, 61.

<sup>94</sup> Linda Moleski, article-interview with Geddy Lee, “Production Opens ‘Windows’ for Rush: Rock Group’s New Album ‘Powered’ by New Sound,” *Billboard*, 16 November 1985, 49. Partly because of his habit of smoking cigars, Rush nicknamed Collins “Mr. Big.”



1985 and 1987. These included programmer/keyboardist Andy Richards, who had recently contributed to the U.K. dance pop sensation Frankie Goes to Hollywood. Long before the arrival of songwriter-producers in the 1980s, Rush produced or co-produced its studio albums for reasons of artistic integrity, *not* for reasons of “assessing the commercial potential of [its] material.”<sup>95</sup> Moreover, to solidify its non-Top 40 status, the band left decisions about the release of Rush singles almost entirely to its record companies.

**Figure 4.4:** Album Cover of *Power Windows* (H. Syme, Mercury/Anthem, 1985)



Hugh Syme’s cover art for *Power Windows* (see Figure 4.4, above) shows a teenaged boy apparently using a remote control to open his bedroom window. Behind him, three televisions that do not quite look like televisions—presumably one for each member of

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<sup>95</sup> For a discussion of this concept, see Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, 221.

Rush—stand askew in the middle of the room. The boy stares at us, as if to solicit our blessing for him to explore the brave new world (adulthood?) outside. A lightning flash shows through the window, recalling the storm imagery of part of Syme’s album cover for *Grace under Pressure* (1984). On one of the television screens, a faint doppelgänger of the same boy stares at us through binoculars, thus creating a triangle with his adolescent arms. (The same image appears in its unobscured original on the back cover.) The remote-controlled bedroom window, the televisions, the binoculars, the lightning flash, and the electrical outlet below the window all provide visual puns for the album title, which reflects various types of power and their sociological effects.<sup>96</sup>

#### **“The Big Money” (*Power Windows*, 1985)**

The opening song of *Power Windows*, “The Big Money,” picks up on the band’s ongoing ambivalence about media and industry contexts, and, appropriately, the band performs the song’s music video mainly on a large “Monopoly”-like set. The “TV boy” from the album cover appears in a number of sequences and the band members themselves also seem to get sucked into TV screens, but otherwise in the video the band somewhat *downplays* its use of technology. On Lee’s part of the stage, a stand holds several keyboards, but Lee plays a (normal-sized) Wal bass for most of the song (see Figure 4.5).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Paul Théberge refers to a perceived authenticity in playing vintage equipment and to *Keyboard* magazine’s related “Vintage Synths” instructional columns. See Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, 119-20. See also <http://www.oldtech.com/synth/>, <http://www.synthzone.com/>, <http://www.synthmuseum.com/>, <http://www.sonicstate.com/synth/>, and <http://www.vintagesynth.org>.

<sup>97</sup> This contrasts with the much greater amount of technology (e.g., Lee’s earlier compact/high-tech Steinberger bass) shown in the videos made for songs from 1984. Lee bought a Wal Pro II bass.

**Figure 4.5: Geddy Lee on the video set of “The Big Money” (1985)**

Wal Pro II bass, Moog Taurus I pedals, and (bottom to top) PPG Wave 2.3,  
Yamaha DX-7, Yamaha QX-1 sequencer;

note also the “Monopoly”-like game-board video set.

(See the Rush WebRing: <http://s.webring.com/hub?sid=&ring=rushring&id=&hub>)



For the song’s main synthesizer line, Lee simultaneously plays a keyboard and the Moog Taurus I pedals at the base of the keyboard stand. Parts of the song feature Peart’s electronic drums and/or voice-derived samples, including some played by drums, which decidedly blurs the categories of electronic drums, samples, and background vocals and makes them quite difficult to differentiate aurally. The song’s second introduction uses real drums (which the song’s video shows Peart playing), but it also includes keyboard parts and sample-based orchestral hits.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> This contrasts with Peart’s frequent use of Simmons electronic drums in certain 1984 videos.

The chorus (in 4/4) prominently features Lifeson's raw guitar sound, Peart's aggressive drumming (on a traditional, if large, rock kit), and Lee's active/"popping" bass guitar. By comparison, parts of the verses (in 6/4) include voice-like synthesizer sounds, duplications of Lee's voice, and also samples of Lifeson's guitar played on keyboards. Similarly, the first part of Lifeson's guitar solo features numerous keyboard, electronic, and sampled sounds, and some of the song's more elaborate keyboard parts probably feature Andy Richards—a guest performer who played on parts of this album. Thus, much of the song explores mid-1980s extremes within traditional rock *and* electronic elements, which parallels the band's two-part ambivalence—about the music industry and about music technology. The verses of Peart's lyrics refer to mixed feelings or a love/hate relationship, such as "Sometimes pushing all the buttons; sometimes pulling out the plug," but the song also inscribes this musically. The song also exemplifies post-progressive rock: as with "New World Man," "Red Sector A," and "The Body Electric" (1982-84) it avoids "odd metres" and includes only a very small amount of virtuosic melodic/rhythmic interplay.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The chorus of the album's second song, "Grand Designs," refers to "life in two dimensions" as a "mass production scheme." It also suggests the band's continuing preference for going "against the run of the mill" and for "swimming against the stream." The first verse refers to "style without substance," thus implicating the numerous mid-1980s' synth-pop stylists who achieved considerable success without much of an ability to play instruments—"so much mind on the matter" that "the spirit gets forgotten about." The band transcends its use of music technology by bridging it with an ongoing "real instrument" acumen—to "break the surface tension with our wild kinetic dreams." The song's main synthesizer line uses a sample of an acoustic guitar transformed into a vaguely sitar-like sound. Chorus 2 features grand piano samples and synthesizer sounds programmed into a sequenced (otherwise virtually unplayable) montage of arpeggios. In other places, the band processes Neil Peart's voice through electronic effects, and he plays these on his Simmons electronic drums.

### **“Manhattan Project” (*Power Windows*, 1985)**

The activities of rock musicians and fans in the post-counterculture resemble the tendency among 20th-century males to produce technically compelling inventions first and ask questions later. Brian Easlea quotes the U.S. nuclear weapons coordinator J. Robert Oppenheimer as saying that “when you seen something that is technically sweet you go ahead and do it and you argue about what to do about it only after you have had your technical success.”<sup>100</sup> The album’s third song, “Manhattan Project,” concerns the drive for Oppenheimer and others to display this kind of technical prowess in the context of nuclear weaponry. Feminist Simone de Beauvoir, as paraphrased by Judy Wajcman, suggests that “male accomplishments in the field of science and technology serve to bestow a virile status on the respective male achievers and thereby underwrite a claim to masculinity.”<sup>101</sup> Related to this, but also largely contradicting it, male *and female* hardcore Rush musician-fans valorized Lee, Lifeson, and Peart’s technical abilities, powerful playing, and songwriting in order to underwrite their virility as musicians, not as men or women.

“Manhattan Project” inscribes Peart’s ambivalence about the inevitable “big bang” (i.e., nuclear weaponry) having produced “more than [its inventors] bargained for,” and the song thus reflects a critically ambivalent worldview, not an apocalyptic one. Rush’s tentative experiments with synthesizers in the 1970s swelled in the 1980s and similarly inscribed an unanticipated prominence. The verses consistently include synthesized and sampled sounds and thus convey a sense of technological irony: Lee points out that keyboard associate Andy Richards contributed a “fretless bass” part on a

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<sup>100</sup> J. Robert Oppenheimer, quoted in Judy Wajcman, “Technology as Masculine Culture,” *Feminism Confronts Technology*, 138.

<sup>101</sup> Judy Wajcman, “Technology as Masculine Culture,” 139.

synthesizer which Lee then had to replicate with an inferior sample-based method in order to play it live.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, the chorus features a more traditional Rush sound: a complex rhythm featuring guitar. A later instrumental section (3:20-3:45) incorporates a string section (along with extensive wordless vocals) playing a vaguely Russian-sounding string arrangement by Anne Dudley of the U.K., postmodern techno band Art of Noise.<sup>103</sup> The song ends with a fade-out featuring a reflective distillation of Lifeson's main earlier guitar part and a similar reprise of Peart's opening "military" (cautionary?) snare roll. David Fricke succinctly described "Manhattan Project" as the first song "about the A-bomb that successfully combines Genesis-like grandeur, real strings, and a breakaway middle à la Siouxsie and the Banshees at full throttle."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Tom Mulhern, "Geddy Lee," *Guitar Player*, April 1986, 86.

<sup>103</sup> Like Richards, Dudley contributed to recordings by Frankie Goes to Hollywood. She later wrote scores for *The Crying Game* (1992) and *The Full Monty* (1997), winning an Oscar for the latter.

<sup>104</sup> David Fricke, review of *Power Windows*, *Rolling Stone*, 30 January 1986, 46. The fourth song, "Marathon," also uses a string section arrangement by Anne Dudley, as well as a wordless choral arrangement by U.K. musician-arranger Andrew Jackman. The song outlines Peart's desire not to burn out too fast. The song's verses mainly use traditional rock instruments (including Lee's active, "popping" bass), but its chorus focuses mainly on Lee's voice ("the peak is never passed," etc.) in combination with voice-like synthesizer chords and Peart's drumming. Lifeson's guitar features prominently in much of the instrumental 7/4 and 7/8 middle sections, but Lee features bass first and then keyboards to match Lifeson. Lee underscores the moralizing 7/4 bridge with keyboards: "You can do a lot in a lifetime, if you don't burn out too fast . . ." The choral and orchestral contributions then join later versions of the song's chorus, which modulates optimistically upward by whole tone. (Christian rock musicians also frequently used this basic "transcendence" technique.) These elements, along with extensive overdubbing of Lee's voice, heighten the emotional effect of not burning out psychologically. The song concludes the first half of the album with a very long fadeout, suggesting that the song's optimism never really ends.

### **“Mystic Rhythms” (*Power Windows*, 1985)**

The eighth and final song of *Power Windows*, “Mystic Rhythms,” also fits the album’s themes of power and of the blurring of technology. As Geddy Lee explains:

Everything in it is going through a synthesized something. We spent a day sampling African drums, tablas, roto-toms, and all kinds of bizarre sounds. We found four appropriate ones, locked into four different AMS’s [delay units with sampling capabilities] that were triggered by Neil playing his Simmons kit. There’s a very unique guitar sound, too. It’s an Ovation acoustic guitar going through amplification and it comes off with a very synth-like sound.<sup>105</sup>

The song’s video also participates in these types of ambiguities: unlike the modern TV screens in the video for “The Big Money,” the video for “Mystic Rhythms” incorporates old-fashioned variants of projection technology, thus somewhat recalling the trio of odd-looking TVs on the album cover. Images of water, reflection, and light (and nature generally) contrast with an elaborate mechanical toy, glowing spheres, a Claymation-like Godzilla, nautical-like portholes looking in on Rush, and a skeleton containing other beings. The skeleton and toy reflect the “embedded” nature of the song’s sampled/synthesized soundscape, which comprises, for example, electronic drums consistently triggering sampled percussion, twice as much synthesizer “airtime” as bass guitar (83% vs. 41%), and a few “seagull” noises reminiscent of the electronic bird sounds (a.k.a. the “music score”) of Alfred Hitchcock’s film *The Birds* (1963). Also, the melodies and chords favour pentatonic elements (thus referencing “non-western” constructions), and the lyrics refer to the natural/mystical world outside:

**“Mystic Rhythms” (excerpts):**

The more we think we know about, the greater the unknown.  
We suspend our disbelief, and we are not alone. . . .  
We sometimes catch a window: a glimpse of what’s beyond.  
Was it just imagination stringing us along?

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<sup>105</sup> Perry Stern, article-interview with Lee and Lifeson, “Rush: Baroque Cosmologies in their past, the boys focus on ‘the perfect song,’” *Canadian Musician* 7.6 (1985).

Music technology can embed such “unknown” things, and, paralleling its accretionary introduction, the song ends with an extended fade-out to a virtually inaudible—and thus technologically deceptive—synthesizer “real ending” to conclude the album. As Neil Peart put it, the song provides a “good marriage of lyrics and music.”<sup>106</sup>

### “Force Ten” (*Hold Your Fire*, 1987)

*Hold Your Fire* (1987, again co-produced with Peter Collins and mostly recorded in the U.K.) continues Rush’s experiment in bridging music technology and hard rock. As with the aspects of power on *Power Windows* (e.g., big money, the Manhattan project, ambition, regional pride, dreams, emotion, and nature), its theme revolves around aspects

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<sup>106</sup> Neil Peart, *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* (1986). The NBC television network used “Mystic Rhythms” as the theme for its show “1986.”

The second half of *Power Windows* (before “Mystic Rhythms”) begins with “Territories,” “Middletown Dreams,” and “Emotion Detector.” “Territories” concerns globalization vs. regionalisms and includes a joke about everyone thinking they have “better beer.” Peart avoids playing a snare drum in this song and instead features elaborate hi-hats rhythms, tom fills, and bongos. Peter Gabriel’s world music influences in the early 1980s also often avoided snare drums. The vaguely pentatonic guitar and keyboard melodies also suggest world music influences. The chorus features held synthesizer chords and bass pedals, but other sections feature dance-like rhythmic guitar gestures. Peart puns on the word “indifferent” (“in different”), and Lee includes a sample of his voice on the words “round and round.”

“Middletown Dreams” complements the suburban imagery of “Subdivisions” and “The Analog Kid” (both 1982) and the writer/dancer biographies of “Losing It” (also 1982) with lyrics about people whose dreams provide some “transport” concerning their lives: a salesman who relies on his hidden booze, a teenaged guitarist who aspires to become “a brilliant shooting star,” and a “middle-aged Madonna” with artistic ambitions. Peart selected “Middletown” as one of the most common “heartland” names for a small town teeming with such persons.

“Emotion Detector” begins with Lee playing a heavily layered synthesizer sound, to which the band gradually adds Peart’s percussion sounds and Lifeson’s guitar. Lifeson’s guitar takes over toward the end, before a synth-heavy second introduction. Peart applies ambivalence to lyrics about relationships and feelings (“It’s true that love can change us, but never quite enough”). Lee keeps his vocal range relatively low for much of the song, but for “throw ourselves wide open” (Verse 1) he sings higher notes. Lee uses his PPG synthesizer for the song’s higher melodies, and sequencers or arpeggiators also provide high keyboard parts in certain sections. Lifeson’s guitar solo initially appears over a bass part by Lee that almost matches it in melodic importance. Later parts of the solo occur over a reprise of the song’s relatively melodic, synthesizer-based second introduction. Peart sometimes plays his Simmons electronic drums in this song, but most often to trigger organic/wooden-sounding samples. Toward the end of the song, the band pairs a recurring instrumental chordal “hook” with the words “feelings run high.”



of “time,” including nature and human nature. The opening song, “Force Ten,” uses the maximum level of the Beaufort wind velocity scale as an analogy for the storms of life. Neil Peart based his lyrics on something provided by Pye Dubois, thus paralleling the origins of Rush’s best-known song (“Tom Sawyer,” 1981), and the band also wrote the song in a few hours, thus paralleling Rush’s hit song (“New World Man,” 1982). The Hemingway-like lyrics encourage the listener to transcend not only one’s inability to predict things but also the powerful forces that one cannot control. Sampled choir, crowd, and guitar sounds begin the song, followed by jackhammer samples (later reprised to end the song) and a woman’s laugh—powerful forces comparable to the force ten wind storm of the song’s title.

Lee’s fifth-centred main riff (C/G and D/A above an A pedal) and Lifeson’s related guitar derivations join Peart’s aggressive rock drumming. This underscores the vocal introduction: “Tough times demand tough talk, demand tough hearts, demand tough songs . . . .” The verses (in 4/4) feature a call-and-response pattern between Lee’s vocals and Lifeson’s guitar gestures (recalling “Afterimage,” 1984), as the lyrics oscillate between extremes: “We can rise and fall like empires, flow in and out like the tide . . . .” (recalling the lyrical ambiguity of “The Big Money,” 1985). The harmonies expand the fifth-pattern to additional notes, especially F#. The bridge uses keyboards and fills in numerous chords and notes only implied earlier, continuing with F# (now major or minor) but also adding D#, C#, and even E#. This jarring move towards sharp-side diatonicism parallels the bridge’s relatively positive take on things. A middle section returns to open fifths (but now in 6/4) and featuring ethereal-sounding synthesizers for a kind of mellow chorus: “Look in to the eye of the storm. Look out to the form without form. . . .” The instrumental “solo” section (2:51-3:26, in 4/4) at first features Lifeson’s

atmospheric guitar gestures over Lee's open fifths, but this gives way to a rhythmically eccentric section (derived from cross-rhythms) featuring keyboards, bass, guitar, and drums. The song ends with additional 6/4 choruses and then material reprising the song's introduction (i.e., back in 4/4).

**“Time Stand Still” (*Hold Your Fire*, 1987)**

“Time Stand Still” features guest backup vocals by Aimee Mann (recently of the band ‘Til Tuesday). This produces an emotional resonance for some of the song's lyrics:

**“Time Stand Still” (excerpts):**

Time stand still: I'm not looking back, but I want to look around me now.

Time stand still: see more of the people and the places that surround me now.

. . . Experience slips away. . . . The innocence slips away.

It also suggests Rush's “progressive” desire to look outside itself and to a wide variety of colleagues and influences, including a female singer-songwriter who also appears in the song's video as a movie camera operator and backup singer. The video makes pervasive use of “blue-screen” effects, where separate video elements can be spliced and moved around separately, so that the individual band members (with their instruments) and Mann (with the camera) often float around on a set or outside in nature. As a supporting singer on the song itself (sometimes contributing short passage of “lead” vocals), Mann's presence in the video also provides realistic supporting images. When the “innocence slips away” at the end of the song, Mann pleasantly waves goodbye and she and her movie camera magically disappear off into the background. Her pleasant departure, and the band's apparent lack of concern about this, suggest fleeting influence rather than a lasting collaboration. Peart reports that he sampled Asian temple blocks in order to use

them at pitches other than their native ones.<sup>107</sup> The song uses non-subtle keyboards mainly in the comparatively gentle chorus that also features Peart's sampled temple blocks (47%) and Mann's vocals. The instrumental middle section features semi-virtuosic guitar, bass, and drums, a certain degree of sampled sound effects, and the 7/4 time signature that comprises over one-quarter of the song. Lifeson's guitar (98%) and Peart's drums (99%) participate almost constantly throughout, but the song forgoes a guitar solo in favour of short, virtuosic bass flourishes in between various sections.

Compared with "Force Ten" and "Time Stand Still," "Open Secrets" (third) contains a relatively large amount of synthesizer elements.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, although their lyrics ostensibly address other things, the fourth and fifth songs, "Second Nature" and "Prime Mover," both self-consciously address Rush's use of music technology in this period and, revealingly (and like "Time Stand Still"), neither song includes a guitar solo.<sup>109</sup> The video for the sixth song, "Lock and Key," features the colourful red balls

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<sup>107</sup> See William F. Miller, article-interview with Peart, "Neil Peart/Rush," *Modern Drummer*, December 1989.

<sup>108</sup> Alex Lifeson discusses the genesis of his guitar solos with reference to "Open Secrets:" [Solos come from] the mood . . . created by the music. I suppose in a way that makes it attached to the lyrics. But it's more the music that provides the trigger for what the solo does. If it's a dark, melancholy sound to a particular song, then the solo will reflect that. An example is "Open Secrets." It has that lonely mood to it from a musical point of view. I think the solo in that song reflects that wailing loneliness. Article-interview with Alex Lifeson, *Guitar Player* (August 1988). Author unknown.

Peart's lyrics for "Open Secrets" concern people letting hidden barriers impede their personal growth: "The things that we're concealing will never let us grow. Time will do its healing. You've got to let it go." Lifeson's solo incorporates whammy bar effects that produce something resembling inner-torment/sighing wails. This sort of gesture certainly fits Peart's lyrics. However, it also fits the spaciousness of the song's musical gestures, such as its open fourths, moderate tempo, modest rhythms, and leisurely chordal pacing.

<sup>109</sup> Stern, "Rush," *Canadian Musician*, 10.1, 1988.

"Second Nature" features a layered keyboard progression, incorporating piano and string sounds, plus brass sounds. The album credits Andrew Jackman with composing and conducting a brass arrangement. The lyrics from the end of Chorus 2 may point to Rush's interest in music technology: "It's hard to take the heat. It's hard to lay blame, to fight the fire while we're feeding the flames."

"Prime Mover" establishes guitar/bass/drums rock instrumentation and begins with the words: "Basic,

(and, briefly, their juggler) also shown in Hugh Syme’s album art. Right from its opening gestures and throughout its first minute, the song relies heavily on synthesizers and samples, even though the video shows only a single keyboard.<sup>110</sup>

### “Mission” (*Hold Your Fire*, 1987)

The seventh song, “Mission,” contains the line “hold your fire”—the album title. The lyrics somewhat reprise the individualism that Peart earlier derived from Ayn Rand and Ernest Hemingway, and the title phrase refers not to its more obvious meaning of “don’t shoot,” but to persevering with one’s “burning desire” or “inner flame.” The lyrics include a wide variety of relevant words: fire, burning, bright, flame, dream, ignite, spirit, vision, mission, passion, heart, power, instinct, drive, danger, imagination, focus, soar, ambition, desire, obsession, light, wish, spark, alive, action, pride, paradise. The song uses diatonic sections in D major and B major (not B minor), recalling a similar construction in “Force Ten.” This odd, cross-relational construction gives the song a suitably varied, yet positive-sounding, tonal underpinning for such a wide array of

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elemental, instinct to survive stirs the higher passions; thrill to be alive.” Although a subtle keyboard pad participates in this, it disappears entirely for an aggressive rock sound on the words: “Alternating currents in a tidewater surge. Rational resistance to an unwise urge. Anything can happen.” Every time this final phrase appears during the song, keyboards and/or samples enter the texture. Moreover, the first half of Verse 2 allows keyboards to subsume the texture for these words: “Basic temperamental filters on our eyes alter our perceptions. Lenses polarize.”

<sup>110</sup> On the album cover, three balls—one for each of Lee, Lifeson, and Peart—form a triangle. On the album’s inner artwork, an old man juggles burning versions of these balls, also in a triangle. The video for “Lock and Key” contrasts the colourful balls and studio set by inserting a number of brief, black-and-white classic movie “samples.” These provide commentaries on certain lyrics: “terrible choice,” “fanatical cause,” and, especially, the title phrase “lock and key:” a prisoner and his jail cell. Certain parts of the song extensively use overdubs of Geddy Lee’s voice. Thus, the video *shows* Alex Lifeson singing, even though we *hear* two or more versions of Geddy Lee’s voice. The video also inserts live concert footage for the (very brief) guitar solo and other instrumental sections. On the recording of this song, Lee plays a custom Wal bass with a fifth string on a low B: a fourth below the instrument’s normal lowest string. Although he could have achieved such low notes on a synthesizer, he wished to privileged his traditional instrument. The band again recorded with co-producer Collins.

positive lyrical terms. The middle instrumental section (2:48-3:41 or 17% of the song) switches to 5/4 and B mixolydian (flat 7). Among the eccentric elements of this section, the band includes augmented chords, an elaborate rhythmic unison (in E minor) of Lee's bass with Peart's simultaneous layering of snare drum and marimba (played on a sampler via a KAT MIDI percussion controller), and Lifeson's strange, temporary move to flat-side harmonies. The lyrics immediately following the middle section state: "It's cold comfort to the ones without it . . . ." This means that successfully eccentric behaviour, such as Rush's, can provide *real* comfort only to other people who establish realistic missions for themselves. Such an attitude could hardly be further from the counterculture.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> "Turn the Page" (eighth) begins in a rhythmically fast 6/4 and shows signs of having originated in Geddy Lee's bass playing. The active bass part continues throughout the verses, but the vocal melody establishes quite different rhythmic syncopations and other patterns. Lee explains that it took him a long time to learn to play and sing this song simultaneously. Tolleson, *Bass Player*, Nov./Dec. 1988. Harmonically, the song begins with certain features not unlike the tonally/modally inventive instrumental middle section of "Mission." The abrupt shifts parallel the lyrics about an extremely wide variety of elements encountered in a daily newspaper, then the chorus (in 4/4) characterizes the newspaper (perhaps all media) as, at best, a time capsule or a wind tunnel: is truth a moving target or is it just poorly lit? When we can't answer these things: "We disengage. We turn the page." Lifeson's blustery solo parallels the lyrics' "wind tunnel."

"Tai Shan" (ninth) denotes Neil Peart's wonder at a holy mountain that he had visited in China. The flute-like sounds at the very beginning of the song evoke the Asian Shakuhachi flute. The band also includes samples of Asian percussion instruments (e.g., gongs and temple blocks).

The tenth and last song, "High Water," also inscribes a certain amount of exoticism, referring to endless floods, ocean spray, mountain springs, flowing marble fountains, mighty rivers, waves crashing on the shoreline, torrents of tropical rain, and the driving rain of redemption. The water "takes us home" and streams "down inside our veins," because our mammalian ancestors "broke the surface" and emerged from it. The song includes a substantial amount of synthesizers and sampled sounds, including musical analogues for certain parts of the lyrics. Some of the keyboard parts use extensive flanging (or a similar digital technique), where the timbre changes slightly on each subsequent note or chord. The bass and drums seem comparatively basic, but Lifeson receives several brief guitar solo "windows." One section of the song includes a string arrangement composed and conducted by Steven Margoshes. Near the end, the song also includes backward samples of Aimee Mann's voice. This gives an eerie, exotic effect, but it is probably largely inaudible without headphones.

*Kerrang!* listed *Hold Your Fire* at #17 on its 1987 Top 20 end-of-year list.

## “I Want to Look around Me Now”

In its music and concert tours from 1980 to 1988, Rush expanded its ongoing strategy of “permanent change” by including influences from post-punk/new-wave rock, post-progressive hard rock, and jazz/rock fusion. Lyrically, the band addressed a wide spectrum of the human condition, including: pride, freedom, fame, self-doubt, war, ambition, conflict, originality, burning out, vulnerability, outside forces, and loneliness. Rush’s music exemplifies Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus*: a “system of structured, structuring dispositions.”<sup>112</sup> For Rush and its fans, this system involves the virtuosic interaction of guitar, bass, drums, and, to a lesser extent, voice. In the 1980s, Rush’s *habitus* provided the band, to use Bourdieu’s terms, with “relative autonomy” from the “external determinations” of the “immediate present” of music technology. Rush snatched music technology away “from the contingency of the accidental and constitute[d] it as a problem by applying it to the very principles of its solution.”<sup>113</sup> Instead of abandoning it as a problem around 1982, the band worked through certain timbral and textural possibilities and added these to its “embodied history.” The band became especially enamoured of sampling technology, and it sometimes sampled world music percussion instruments and other “natural” sounds (e.g., voices, machine noises, and even electric guitars) only to play them back in masked variants with keyboards, digital sequencers, and/or electronic drum triggers—thus subtly normalizing the process. However, from 1989 to 2002, the band gradually decreased the *sounds* of music technology while applying related *techniques* within its songwriting and arranging.

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<sup>112</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Polity, 1990), 52.

<sup>113</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 55.

## Chapter 5

### Due Reflection: Human Nature and Other Horizons, 1989-2002

Change is a good thing.<sup>1</sup> [Y]ou cannot stay a band for very long if you're just trying to capitalize on some successful moment you've had in your past . . .<sup>2</sup>

[W]e try to progress, experiment. Some [fans] tolerate it. Some . . . don't.<sup>3</sup>  
[W]e've gotten carried away by technology in writing our music, but it's all acceptable under the guise of experimental music which, in some sense, we make, even though it's accessible music. . . . We're like a cult band, and [critics] would prefer to see us remain that way.<sup>4</sup>

-Geddy Lee, 1991-96

Writing in 1997 about a change in the application of music technology from the mid-to-late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Paul Théberge explains:

[M]icroprocessors have entered . . . [a] secondary stage of diffusion within the musical instrument industry. . . . [N]ew technologies are introduced in three separate phases: invention, innovation, and diffusion. The developments [of MIDI/synthesizer technology], which reached a peak in the synthesizer industry around 1987/88, were perhaps only the prelude to a more widespread diffusion of microprocessors that has become apparent in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

Rush provides an instructive example of the diffusion of post-synthesizer, microprocessor-based music technology after 1987-88. From 1982 to 1987 the band organized much of its new music around a combination of traditional rock instruments (i.e., guitar, bass, drums) and electronically generated (i.e., synthesized, sampled)

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Bessman, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "Rush Rolls With More Organic Sound: Latest Set A 'Reaction Against Technology,'" *Billboard*, 23 November 1991, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Schulte, interview with Geddy Lee, "Rush: Straight from the Heart," *Canadian Musician* 13.5 (1991), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Jancee Dunn, article-interview, "Geddy Lee of Rush," *Rolling Stone*, 12 December 1996, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Dawdy, article-interview with Geddy Lee, "You Can't Hurry Change," *Bassics* 6.2 (1997). See [http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/bassics\\_vol6.html](http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/bassics_vol6.html).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 38.

sounds.<sup>6</sup> In its new music from 1989 to 2002, Rush considerably diminished its use of audible electronics yet pervasively applied computer technology to its songwriting.

### **“Boys’ Camp”**

For each new studio album from 1980 to the early 2000s, Rush’s “Phase 1” arranging/rehearsal period functioned something like summer camp—the band lived and worked together on “retreat” at a house outside of Toronto for a period of about a month or two.<sup>7</sup> In that setting, Peart mainly worked on lyrics while Lee and Lifeson worked on music, but because Lee sings Peart’s lyrics, Lee points out: “[T]here is a lot of conversation that goes down about each song before I start writing melodies.”<sup>8</sup>

Around 1989-91 Lee and Alex Lifeson composed and arranged new songs by combining (1) cassette-based recordings (especially good for capturing “jamming”) with (2) eight-track, reel-to-reel recording/mixing, and (3) computer-based music sequencing (MIDI) software.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, one track of each completed eight-track song-demo triggered (using SMPTE time code) the necessary synthesizer, sampler, and drum

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<sup>6</sup> For live performances, the band continued to use related technology into the 1990s and early 2000s. This included offstage samplers triggered from keyboards and pedals onstage.

<sup>7</sup> During these period, the band members generally spent the weekends with their spouses and children. With a daughter born in 1994, Lee drove home most nights in 1996.

In the mid-1970s, Rush generally wrote new material while on tour. Lee explained in 1976: “The way we usually write is to sit in hotel rooms trying to come up with heavy metal on an acoustic guitar.” Dan Nooger, “Rush Goes into Future Shock: Music Will Not Exist In 2112,” *Circus*, 27 April 1976. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/circus0476.html>. The band wrote *Hemispheres* (1978) entirely in the studio, and from 1979 to 1985 occasionally “workshopped” certain new songs live (e.g., during pre-recording “warm-up” or “spring training” mini-tours).

<sup>8</sup> Geddy Lee, interview in *Guitar World* (March 1990). Also, starting in 1987, Peart word-processed his lyrics on a personal computer. Mary Turner, radio interview with Lee, “Rush—Off The Record,” 1987. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/interviews/otr1987.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Relevant software included Mark of the Unicorn’s Performer on a Macintosh and C-Lab’s Notator software on an Atari ST.



machine elements in sync with the guitar, bass, and vocal recordings on the seven other tracks.<sup>10</sup> From 1993 to 2001, Lee and Lifeson often used a fully digital, computer-based approach to combine all electronic and “acoustic” elements of a song demo in a single place: a computer’s hard disk. In 1993, they used Steinberg’s Cubase Audio, and in 1996 they used Emagic’s Logic Audio. By 1996, Lee and Lifeson did their songwriting jamming onto ProTools professional hard disk recording software. All three programs ran on Macintosh computers. As Lee explains:

[W]e’ve used a lot of computer technology in terms of recording straight into a hard disk. The luxury that gives us is that if Alex and I get an idea for a song, we can play it straight into our computer . . . . From there, I can play with that arrangement and kind of assemble the song. . . . sit there with headphones on and play with the arrangement. It gives you a little bit more objectivity instantly. . . . [B]ecause you’re not playing the thing a million times, it does have a bit more spontaneity. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Then, from stereo mixes of the completed demos (e.g., mixed onto standard cassettes or, in the 1990s, onto digital audio tapes, DATs), the three band members further rehearsed the songs. For example, Peart prepared real drum parts (especially vis-à-vis a song’s pacing, dynamics, and other “support requirements”) and Lifeson worked out his guitar solos. Later, at a fully professional recording studio (“Stage 2”), the band transferred its demos (eight-track reel-to-reel or multi-track computer files) onto twenty-four-track equipment. At that point, the band and its co-producer and engineer spent about eight to ten additional weeks further refining the material and recording the eventual album.

Despite getting “carried away” with computers, only a few of Rush’s 56 new songs released between late 1989 and early 2002 use the audible side of music

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<sup>10</sup> See Andy Widders-Ellis, interview with Lee and Lifeson, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gp1191.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Dawdy, “You Can’t Hurry Change,” *Bassics* 6.2 (1997).

technology in more than a secondary capacity. Many instances of synthesizers and/or samplers prove nearly unnoticeable except when loudly amplifying certain songs. Nearly every review of a new Rush studio album from 1989 to 2002 focused on the band's abandoning of keyboards since the last album. In reality, *Presto* (1989) accomplished the most significant change along these lines, and the subsequent four studio albums reinforced it. In a parallel move, only a few Rush songs from 1989-2002 make use of 1970s/early-1980s, progressive-style asymmetrical time signatures. Instead, the band often uses more "organic"-sounding cross-rhythms, occasional dropped beats (e.g., occasional bars of 2/4 while otherwise in 4/4), or contrasting sections in alternate time signatures, such as 6/4 or 3/4 when otherwise in 4/4.

Rush's new songs from 1989 to 2002 reduced the sounds of 1970s/early-1980s progressive rock and of mid-1980s' music technology to occasional or residual status. Concurrently, the band's traditional guitar/bass/drums approach re-emerged. Though less noticeable audibly as "progress," hard disk recording and arranging dominated the band's practice—its compositional application of music technology.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In 1991 Lee switched to solid-state (non-tube) amps with custom cabinets. In 1993, he mainly reverted to a classic tube-based setup without active pickups. In 1993, he switched from Wal basses (which he mainly used from 1985 to 1992) and resurrected the 1972 Fender Jazz he had not used for recording since 1984. From 1996 to 2002, Lee mainly used Fender basses, including the one from 1972 and one with a "hip shot" low D detuner (e.g., used for six tracks on *Test for Echo*, 1996). For Rush's 1994 tour, Rush's synthesizer technician Tony Geranios (a.k.a. Jack Secret) sampled certain older Oberheim and Moog synthesizer sounds for Lee to play via a MIDI controller. For the 1996-97 tour Lee reverted to playing an actual on-stage Minimoog and Moog Taurus pedals. For his 1996-97 vocals, he used an AKG 414 as well as older Neumann microphones.

From 1990 to 2002, Lifeson switched from Signature electric guitars (which he mainly used from 1987 to 1990) and started using Paul Reed Smith (PRS) guitars. However, he also used a number of secondary guitars, such as Fender Stratocasters and Telecasters and Gibson Les Pauls. Like Lee, he abandoned solid-state amplification in this period and reverted to warmer-sounding, tube-based amplifiers. Lifeson increased his use of Gibson Les Pauls in 1995-96 and also experimented with the mandola: a large, octave-low variant of the mandolin.

From 1987 to 1994, Peart mainly used a 1991 Ludwig Super Classic drum set, though with many additions (such as a MIDI controller and sampler triggers). From 1996 to 2002, he then endorsed and mainly used drums by the Drum Workshop. In 1991, Peart also endorsed and used Promark's Neil Peart Signature brand of drum sticks. He continued to use Avedis Zildjian cymbals. See also William F. Miller,

## *Presto*, 1989

We wanted [*Presto*] to be more of a singer's album, and I think you'll notice that the arrangements musically support the vocal[s]. . . . Neil's lyrics to me are a lot more heartfelt. Presently, they're experience oriented. I think they deal with living . . . This album was a real reaction against technology in a sense. I was getting sick and tired of working with computers and synthesizers. Fortunately, so was [co-producer] Rupert [Hine]. . . . We made a pact to stay away from strings, pianos, and organs—to stay away from digital technology. In the end, we couldn't resist using them for colour.<sup>13</sup>

-Geddy Lee, 1990

On *Presto* (1989), only “Red Tide” (track 9), “Available Light” (track 11), and, to a somewhat lesser extent, “War Paint” (track 4) and “Anagram (for Mongo)” (track 8), feature synthesizers or samplers more than incidentally or subtly. Even the sequencing of these four tracks suggests a significant downplaying of audible music technology on the first two-thirds of the album. The band's four studio albums from 1982-87 differ significantly from this.<sup>14</sup> The fact that co-producer Rupert Hine, who had previously

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interview with “Neil Peart/Rush,” *Modern Drummer*, December 1989 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md1289.html>), John Stix, article-interview with Alex Lifeson, “Alex Lifeson: The Art of Preparation,” *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, May 1991 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gfpm0591.html>), Widders-Ellis, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991; John Stix, article-interview with Geddy Lee, “Geddy Lee—Rush: It's a Groove Thing,” *Guitar for the Practicing Musician*, December 1991 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gfpm1291.html>), Andy Aledort, review-interview with Lifeson and Lee, “Guitarist Alex Lifeson and Bassist Geddy Lee revisit their stripped down, power trio roots on *Counterparts*, the strongest Rush release in years,” *Guitar World*, Feb. 1994 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gw0294.html>), Philip Dawdy, “You Can't Hurry Change,” *Bassics* 6.2 (1996), and Paul Myers, article-interview with Lee, Lifeson, and Peart, “Rush Put Themselves To The ‘Test,’” *Canadian Musician*, 1996 no. 6 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/cm1296.html>).

<sup>13</sup> Nick Krewen, article-interview with Geddy Lee and Neil Peart, “Rush: Presto change-o,” *Canadian Musician* 12.2 (1990), 33.

After fifteen years with Mercury, Rush switched to Atlantic in 1989 (as of *Presto*) and released five new studio albums and one live album from 1989 to 2002. From 1990 to 2003, Mercury released anthologies and video compilations of the band's material from 1974 to 1987. See also Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> The *opening* tracks of those albums (“Subdivisions,” “Distant Early Warning,” “The Big Money,” and “Force Ten”) all make more than incidental use of synthesizers and/or samplers. Also significantly, all four make some use either of asymmetrical time signatures (7/8 in “Subdivisions” and “Distant Early Warning”) or alternating time signatures among different sections (4/4 vs. 6/4 in “The Big Money” and “Force Ten”). The band tended to downplay the former after 1987.

worked with the Fixx, Tina Turner, and others, similarly resisted the use of digital technology suggests that Lee had already largely abandoned keyboards in the pre-Hine songwriting period at “Boys’ Camp.”<sup>15</sup>

### “Show Don’t Tell” (*Presto*, 1989)<sup>16</sup>

On *Presto* (1989), Rush’s funk/groove-inspired playing infuses the band’s music at least as much as music technology. Keyboards, although still present for 52% of the song, provide only a small amount of timbral colour compared to the guitar, bass, and drums. Lee plays bass for most of the song and lets sequencers (or co-producer Rupert Hine or keyboard associate Jason Sniderman) play most of the keyboard parts.

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<sup>15</sup> Of the eleven songs, four mainly inscribe G major, G minor, and/or G dorian. Others mainly inscribe A minor (“Show Don’t Tell”), F minor (“Scars”), D minor/dorian (“Red Tide”), and, in four cases (“The Pass,” “Presto,” “Superconductor,” and “Available Light”), two or several keys.

After recording mostly in the U.K. ca 1985-87, Rush returned to recording mostly in Canada, at Quebec’s Le Studio (1989-93) and at Toronto’s McClear (1989-96) and Reaction studios (1996-2001).

<sup>16</sup> The magic/nature aspect of *Presto* appears in Hugh Syme’s grayscale cover art of eleven rabbits sitting on a small hill. Most of these animals appear in the lower foreground, taking up nearly half of the cover. An inverted magician’s top-hat hovers over the hill’s peak in the middle background, with a twelfth rabbit peaking over the hat’s rim. The images suggest that the first eleven rabbits emanated from the hat’s “magic.” This presumably represents Rush’s post-technology stylistic direction, as in “Presto Change-O.” (Also, “presto” means “quickly” in Italian.) The eleven rabbits on the ground may thus represent the album’s eleven songs, with the twelfth rabbit suggesting “more to come” from the band on its new record label and/or with less use of music technology. The ominous clouds behind the hill (and on the back cover) similarly suggest a magical “change in the weather.” As if not to take this too seriously, each concert during Rush’s later *Counterparts* tour (1993-94) included the ritual shooting down of balloon effigies of these same rabbits, as if to say: “We’re still changing.”

*Presto*’s CD booklet includes, in addition to the lyrics, Andrew MacNaughtan’s portrait of each band member as well as Syme’s graphic indicating the game Rock-Paper-Scissors. This relates to the album’s second-last song, “Hand over Fist.” Rock-Paper-Scissors also appears as one of Syme’s numerous groupings for the ornate folded inlay for Rush’s album *Counterparts* (1993).

From earlier 1989, Syme’s album and video covers for *A Show of Hands* (live, Mercury/Anthem, early 1989) feature highly stylized, Claymation-like version of each of the band members in mid-song. (These are based on “The Rockin’ Constructivists” by John Halfpenny.) Similar images, probably computer-generated, had appeared among the film backdrops of the band’s 1987-88 tour.

“Show Don’t Tell” spent several weeks at #1 on *Billboard*’s chart of Rock Album Tracks around Christmas of 1989. Also, a nomination for a Juno award acknowledged the album’s production work by Hine and Rush.

Moreover, Lee plays a quite elaborate bass solo (9% of the duration) during the song's middle section, and the band also gives a large portion of the song (23%) to "neo-progressive" virtuosic unison passages. Lifeson, although his guitar participates through most of the song, does not play more than a few seconds of solo-like material, and the song also includes no asymmetrical time signatures. However, the highly complex main unison riff more than makes up for such a lack of traditional "progressive" elements and provides a good example of the band's direction away from mathematical/metrical playing (and away from music technology) and towards a more emotional and rhythmic style of playing (see Example 5.1).

**Example 5.1: Main Riff of "Show Don't Tell," 0:16-41<sup>17</sup>**  
 (on the repeats, the bass guitar pattern varies from this in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> measures)

**NOTE: MP3 audio files of all notated examples in this study appear as links at:**  
<http://durrellbowman.com/dissexamples.html>

♩ = 124  
 repeat twice

A7sus4 E min D C

A7sus4 C sus2 G C D C

<sup>17</sup> This riff first appears after about sixteen seconds of quiet, anticipatory percussion sounds.

Funk-like aspects here include the extended chord tones (e.g., the 7<sup>th</sup> and suspended 4<sup>th</sup> on the tonic), the gestural pause after the opening sixteenth-note flourish, the rhythmic anticipation into the second beat of the second measure, the chromatic melody inflections (F#s), the inconsistencies between the guitar and bass notes at the beginning of the fourth bar, and the metrical compression of the first 2 ¾ measures in the last 1 ¼ measures. As Peart says of this song:

“Show Don’t Tell” begins with a syncopated guitar riff that appears two or three times throughout the song. That was about the hardest thing for me to find the right pattern for. I wanted to maintain a groove and yet follow the bizarre syncopations that the guitar riff was leading into. It was demanding technically, but at the same time, because of that, we were determined that it should have a rhythmic groove under it. It’s not enough for us to produce a part that’s technically demanding; it has to have an overwhelming significance musically. So it had to groove into the rest of the song and it had to have a pulse to it that was apart from what we were playing.<sup>18</sup>

[Lyrically,] I adopted an attitude and character. I took a stance and a good attitude and developed it. . . . I find a trend for us since *Grace under Pressure* [1984] has been cutting of abstractions.<sup>19</sup>

The “adopted attitude” seems to suggest that apart from our closest friends, others should not expect us to believe what they say. Peart couches the lyrics in courtroom imagery: due reflection, objections, judge, jury, evidence, order in the court, witness take the stand, Exhibit A, etc. Given that he calls this a “good attitude” and given his mixed feelings about fame in “Limelight” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981), one might infer at least a partially autobiographical slant to these lyrics.<sup>20</sup> “Scars,” “Superconductor,” and “Hand over Fist”

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<sup>18</sup> William F. Miller, “Neil Peart/Rush,” *Modern Drummer*, December 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Krewen, “Rush: Presto change-o,” *Canadian Musician* 12.2 (1990), 37.

<sup>20</sup> In the second song, “Chain Lightning,” Peart applies his interest in nature and meteorological events (e.g., “sun dogs” and meteor showers) to the idea of human response and shared experiences. He also somewhat relates these ideas to his recent travel experiences and to his family. This interest in nature, also apparent in two of the album’s later songs (“Red Tide” and “Available Light”), relates somewhat to Peart’s lyrics for “Jacob’s Ladder” and “Natural Science” (both on *Permanent Waves*, 1980) but now applied less abstractly. Peart also wrote nature-referencing song lyrics in the mid-1980s: “Distant Early Warning” (the opening song of *Grace under Pressure*, 1984) and “Force Ten,” “Tai Shan,” and “High

also include certain groove elements related more to funk than to progressive rock or hard rock.

**“The Pass” (*Presto*, 1989)**

In the album’s third song, “The Pass,” Peart demythologizes teen suicide, thus somewhat recalling his demythologizing of fame in “Limelight” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981) and of nuclear weapons in “Manhattan Project” (*Power Windows*, 1985). The song also previews his demythologizing of the empty term “hero” in “Nobody’s Hero” (*Counterparts*, 1993). Its music grows emotionally from texturally stripped-down and rhythmically methodical verses into more heavily orchestrated choruses, including background vocals and some keyboards. The lyrics address the young person in the second person, presumably from the perspective of a concerned parent trying to get somewhat inside the kid’s head. The chorus (including the ending of song) inscribes a texturally and emotionally rich tone: “Turn around and walk the razor’s edge; don’t turn your back and slam the door on me,” but the last half of this always thins to just Lee’s lead vocal. The song’s video, revived on film during Rush 2002 concert tours, shows a teenaged “burnout” (long hair, white, male) glumly wandering around his school and then literally teetering on the edge of falling to his death. However, he doesn’t go through with it. This ultimately provides the positive suggestion that many young people feel this way but that very few take this final step. The boy’s smirk at the end of the video seems to suggest: “You don’t think I’m *that* stupid, do you?”

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Water” (the first and last two songs of *Hold Your Fire*, 1987). The music includes frantic-sounding accounts of nature and people (i.e., energy, laughter, hope, dreams), rhythmically emphatic responses to these things (i.e., respond, vibrate, feedback, resonate), and a comparatively relaxed chorus (e.g., “when the moment dies, the spark still flies, reflected in another pair of eyes”).

The parental perspective in the lyrics of “The Pass” encourages the kind of responsibility (e.g., meaningful conversations with one’s children) sardonically shown to be lacking on the late-1990s/early-2000s TV show (and 1999 movie) “South Park.” Robert Walser relates courtroom defence evidence that young people sometimes commit terrible acts not because of subliminal messages in music but because of their horrendous childhoods (unemployed parents, drunkenness, beatings, etc.). The prosecution’s argument (the “precedent” of bad childhoods not necessarily leading to suicides) falters given that millions of people listen to heavy metal music without killing themselves.<sup>21</sup> Although the following song, “War Paint,” also addresses suburban teen contexts, other songs on the album address a wide variety of topics.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Wesleyan University Press: Hanover, NH, 1993), 146. In any case, Rush’s “The Pass” counters the gloomy, suicide-note tone of Metallica’s accretionary “Fade to Black” (*Ride the Lightning*, 1984) and the goofy tone of SOD’s (Stormtroopers of Death) thrash metal “Kill Yourself” (*Speak English or Die*, 1985). Donna Gaines discusses these two earlier suicide songs in contextualising her interview with SOD’s Billy Milano, who also implicates the government and media. See Donna Gaines, *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia’s Dead End Kids* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 195, 203-4, 206, 209. As Milano put it: “So if I go home and watch the President’s speech on TV and I go out and kill sixty-five people with a rifle at McDonald’s . . . then I gotta blame the President because I listened to his speech and he made me freak out??” (Gaines, 211). Gaines also discusses the late-1980s TV documentary “The Children of Heavy Metal.”

<sup>22</sup> “War Paint” (fourth) comprises two parallel stories, the first about a pregnant teen who disguises herself in order to escape her present circumstances and the second about a boy (probably the girl’s boyfriend) who simultaneously disguises himself in order to “take the princess.” Both mistake their “dreams for self-delusion.” “Scars” (fifth) includes a pervasive use of sampled western and non-western percussion instruments, which Peart played live via a KAT MIDI controller. See Miller, “Neil Peart/Rush,” *Modern Drummer*, December 1989. This recalls his multi-sample pattern for “Mystic Rhythms” (*Power Windows*, 1985). Peart’s lyrics use the imagery of scars (of pleasure and of pain) to refer, among other things, to positive and negative psychological imprints. Although he resisted deeming the song autobiographical, some of the images clearly resulted from his recent extended trips to China and Africa: a mountaintop (see “Tai Shan,” *Hold Your Fire*, 1987), Serengeti nights, hungry child, desert, and clouds of flies.

The title song, “Presto” (sixth), includes magic/disguise imagery and the phrase “If I could wave my magic wand,” but it otherwise suggests a preference for dreams and “second sight” over an overt belief in magic. “Superconductor” (seventh) applies the title term from physics and electrical engineering to the wildly popular (i.e., resistance-free) illusions created by pop stars. Ironically, the song’s funkier parts inscribe the album’s only instance of an asymmetrical time signature: 7/4. Probably to parallel the lyrics about the artificiality (orchestrated “magic”) of pop stars, the 4/4 sections sound more like “power pop,”



## “Nature” Songs

Ironically, *Presto*’s two most synthesizer-oriented songs, “Red Tide” and “Available Light,” both concern physical nature rather than human nature. The former refers to the “new plagues” of acid rain, ozone holes, and industrial waste. Lee’s syncopated, brass-like synthesizer patterns never quite fit the diatonic, straight-eighths (presumably sequenced) piano pattern. This parallels the fact that these elements contradict the comparative anti-music-technology tone of the album’s first eight songs. Here, the use of music technology parallels Peart’s concerns about the effects of other kinds of technology on the environment:

I really love wildlife, and I spend a lot of my time in the outdoors when I’m not working, so that’s important to me. One of my main hobbies is cycling, so air quality kind of becomes of critical importance. . . . [Y]ou want to say things in a way that is not only not preachy, but also not boring.<sup>23</sup>

Peart borrowed the term “Red Tide” from oceanic microbiology, and some of his lyrics paraphrase “Do Not Go Gently into That Good Night” by the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (1914-53). Lifeson also paralleled Peart’s environmental concerns in his sputtering guitar solo:

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and one critic responded to Lifeson’s use of powerful guitar figures—even in more “pop-oriented” songs—as “cathedral strength fretwork.”

“Anagram (for Mongo)” (eighth) builds largely on “words games” (rarely actual anagrams), where one or more words in a line of the lyrics derive from the available letters in another, usually larger, word in the same phrase. Peart named the song after a character in *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks’ 1974 film comedy) who receives a bomb disguised as a “Candygram for Mongo!” Neil Peart, Rush Backstage Club newsletter, October 1991. This gives a good sense of Rush’s subtle sense of humour. The song’s verses musically recall late-1970s “arena rock.” One critic suggested that the song “pilfers the epic chords from ‘Long, Long Way From Home’ [Foreigner debut, 1977].” Bob Mack, review of *Presto*, *Rolling Stone*, 25 January 1990, 51. Mack means that mature artists steal rather than imitate. Rush’s repeated verse progression follows—in G major: I, flat-VI, flat-VII, IV(maj/min 7), V whereas Foreigner’s follows—in D minor: i, flat-VII. However, the latter song’s bridge follows III, flat-VII, IV(maj), flat-VI, III, IV(maj), V, so Mack must mean this part. Lifeson’s guitar timbre and even-eighths in the Rush song’s verses also somewhat resemble the Foreigner song.

<sup>23</sup> Neil Peart, “Rush Profiled.”

I wanted to get a lot of tension in [the] solo, because the song is quite intense. There's a kind of disturbing feeling about that solo, which I think ties it all together well. The song is angry. Neil is basically a very ecology-minded person, and he wrote this song dealing with the destruction of our environment. So I wanted the music, and especially my solo, to reflect that anger.<sup>24</sup>

This solo briefly replaces Lee's syncopated brass patterns over the piano sequence.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Roll the Bones, 1991***

Lee: Alex and I start[ed] the songs together—just guitar, bass and vocals—the way we used to long ago. It's a more organic approach. . . . [Later, in the studio,] in only four days, Neil and I had all the drums and bass parts down. . . . Alex did almost all the guitars in about eight days."<sup>26</sup>

On *Roll the Bones*, only the title track (with its brass stabs, organ glissandos, and occasional subtle pads), the Grammy-nominated instrumental “Where’s My Thing?” and, to a lesser extent, “Dreamline” and “Neurotica” use synthesizers or samplers more than incidentally. The sequence of these four comparatively technological songs (3, 5, 1, and 9 of ten) seems less “end-weighted” than the four on Rush’s previous album (4, 8, 9, and 11 of eleven). Neither the members of Rush nor the band’s fans ever abandoned their confidence in Rush’s capabilities as rock instrumentalists. Thus, 1991 became something of a banner year for Rush as rock instrumentalists. Rush achieved several reader-based

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<sup>24</sup> Alex Lifeson, interview in *Guitar World*, March 1990.

<sup>25</sup> The closing (eleventh) song, “Available Light,” refers to a restless wind, full moon, sea and sky, city canyons, crying buildings, echoes, the four winds, tricks of light, shadows, and so on. One line suggests a reference to the title of Rush’s 1981 album *Moving Pictures*: “Trick of light, moving picture, moments caught in flight make the shadows darker or the colours shine too bright.” In its verses, the song initially uses piano chords as the main accompanying instrument to Lee’s voice. (In this case, a sequencer or MIDI pedals provide the bass part for much of the song.) In the second verse, which the 6/4-G major-B section of the rock-style chorus nudges up a tone (A minor vs. G minor), Lifeson heightens the gentle “soft jazz” piano/voice/drum texture with blues-like, call-and-response phrases that interact with Lee’s vocals.

<sup>26</sup> It sometimes took three to five weeks to record the guitar parts of a Rush album. See Widders-Ellis, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991.

“life’s work” distinctions in musician-oriented magazines. This began in 1983-86 with Peart in *Modern Drummer*, but it otherwise peaked in 1991.<sup>27</sup>

### **“Dreamline” (*Roll the Bones*, 1991)**

*Roll the Bones* contains no particularly fast songs, which thus often facilitates flow/groove elements. Also, almost every song falls into the key of E and/or A, which allowed for Lee’s relatively low bass guitar parts and similarly low (i.e., mid-natural range) vocals and also freed up overtone frequency space for Lifeson’s guitars.<sup>28</sup> The opening song, “Dreamline,” grew from a short story co-written by Neil Peart and science-fiction writer (and Rush fan) Kevin J. Anderson.<sup>29</sup> The lyrics refer to several restless characters traveling along highways and through deserts, and the first verse also suggests a possible science-fiction context (“a roadmap of Jupiter,” “straight to the heart of the sun”), but the second verse refers to Las Vegas and to “a star map of Hollywood.” The band bases the song’s verses around Lifeson’s picked electric guitar arpeggios (even 4/4 eight-notes, centred around E minor) and the choruses around a much louder, hard rock sound. A brassy synthesizer part also appears in the chorus, but it follows the chords and rhythms already present in the guitar, bass, and drums, and some of the sampled material

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<sup>27</sup> The readers of *Bass Player* voted Geddy Lee its Best Rock Bassist at least six times (including 1993), and it inducted him into its Hall of Fame. In 1991 the readers of *Guitar Player* voted Lee its first Bassist of the Year, and it later inducted him into its Bass Hall of Fame. In 1991 *Guitar for the Practicing Musician* recognized Alex Lifeson’s similar accomplishments (1983-91) and inducted him into its Hall of Fame. (Lifeson achieved similar distinctions in *Guitar Player* and *Guitar World*.)

<sup>28</sup> See Widders-Ellis, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991. On *Roll the Bones*, Lee must have used a five-string bass for certain songs, with one string adding a fourth or fifth below the normal low E. Until the early 1980s, Lee most often sang in a countertenor range against or above the guitars. *Roll the Bones* (1991) also inscribes a greater tonal area consistency than *Presto* (1989).

<sup>29</sup> “Dreamline” repeated the distinction of the opening track of 1989’s *Presto* (“Show Don’t Tell”) by reaching #1 on *Billboard*’s chart of Rock Album Tracks. The song appeared as the opening track on K-Tel/Warner’s *Today’s Hottest Hard Rock*.

provides the sound of passing cars. The song contains no “odd metres,” the “groove” aspects also compensate for the lack of complicated/“progressive” metrical constructions, and the song also features a fairly high degree of background vocals.<sup>30</sup>

### **Additional Aspects of Style and Ideology**

Speaking of his guitar solos for this album’s “Bravado” (second) and “Ghost of a Chance” (eighth), Lifeson said:

When we’re developing the arrangement in the writing stages, I toss a solo on tape so we have something to listen to. . . . These were supposed to be throwaway solos, but when it was time to do the “real” solos, Neil had already adjusted his parts to fit what I’d played. So it came down to me trying to recreate everything—which doesn’t work. You might improve the sound, but even if you play exactly the same notes you’ll never capture that magic feel.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Lee’s “hard”-sounding bass work on “Dreamline” and “Bravado” (the second of eleven songs) relates to the overgrown fingernail that he sometimes used as a substitute guitar pick. See Widders-Ellis, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991. In the interview, Lee indicates that a childhood injury to his right-middle finger caused the nail to grow back stronger.

The second song, “Bravado,” suggests an extension of Peart’s interest in individualism in the direction of social responsibility, as in “We will pay the price, but we will not count the cost.” Speaking of Peart’s masterful drumming, Lee describes the end of this song as “an example of limb independence that rivals any drummer, anywhere.” Geddy Lee, *Roll the Bones* radio premiere broadcast, 1991. Paul Théberge uses remarkably similar language to contextualise music technology vis-à-vis “real” musicians: “The technique required to play a set of drums involves a rhythmic coordination of both mind and body, including a highly complex independence and interplay between the limbs and overall physical balance that is acquired only after long hours of physical disciplining over a period of years.” Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine*, 3. Théberge also quotes an article that suggests: “A lot of people, when they program machines, they don’t think like a drummer would play.” Dennis Chambers, *Musician* 116 (1988), 103. Quoted in Théberge, 4. On the other hand, even Neil Peart refused to categorize this as a bad thing, suggesting that Lee and Lifeson “often come up with some very interesting things” (e.g., with MIDI and on drum machines). Ula Gehret, interview with Peart, “To Be Totally Obsessed—That’s the Only Way,” *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994.

See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/aquarian0394.html>. In any case, Rush problematised the supposed differentiations between rock music (guitar-based) and pop music (synthesizer- and drum machine-based) and between body (e.g., skill, dexterity, style) and mind (e.g., analytical, detached, structured). See also Simon Frith, “Art versus technology: the strange case of popular music” *Media, Culture, and Society* 8.3 (1986), 268 and Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1991), 23-25, 53-54, 136-139.

<sup>31</sup> Widders-Ellis, “Rush Redefined,” *Guitar Player*, November 1991.

This suggests something of the dichotomy of Lee and Lifeson preparing songs so fully during the writing/arranging stage and then leaving it to Peart to arrange and rehearse his drum parts. It also indicates Lifeson's relative position as a "non-stickler." Lee and Peart sometimes indicated similar positions regarding their in-studio performance activities, but it often fell to the band's co-producer (e.g., Rupert Hine, 1989-91; Peter Collins, 1985-87 and 1993-96; or Paul Northfield, 2001) to convince them to accept a slightly less than technically perfect performance if a re-recording might lose the "magic feel."

Responding to an interviewer's detection of a "whiff of funk" in "Roll the Bones" (the title song, placed third) and the Grammy-nominated instrumental "Where's My Thing?" (fifth) Lifeson said: "I've never been an accomplished funk player; I've never felt it. I tried a little bit on *Presto*. I wanted to get better at it, so I took a chance with this record."<sup>32</sup> Although the band attempted to write an instrumental for *Presto* (1989), they kept "borrowing away" excerpts for other songs.<sup>33</sup> Finally, in 1991 "Where's My Thing?" (humorously subtitled "Part IV, 'Gangster of Boats' Trilogy") successfully followed Rush's previous Grammy-nominated instrumental, "YYZ" (*Moving Pictures*, 1981).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Widders-Ellis, "Rush Redefined," *Guitar Player*, November 1991.

<sup>33</sup> Geddy Lee, *Roll the Bones* radio premiere broadcast, 1991.

<sup>34</sup> Similar to "YYZ" losing in 1981 to the Police's "Behind My Camel," "Where's My Thing?" lost in 1992 to guitarist Eric Johnson's "Cliffs of Dover." Significantly, Rush thought highly of the Police in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and Alex Lifeson thought highly of Eric Johnson in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Johnson opened some Rush shows in the early 1990s.

The instrumental's A section features Lifeson's riff combining fast-strummed sixteenth-notes and syncopated chord hits. The texturally homophonic B section includes loud, synthesized filter sweeps at the beginning of its phrases and a kind of call-and-response between the keyboard and guitar. The texturally busier C section varies considerably in dynamics, adds a few extra beats from time to time, and also includes a brief guitar solo. The form, AA'BBA'BBCC'C'A'B'B'B'C/coda, suggests something like a compromise among binary, ternary, rounded binary, rondo, and theme and variations. However, this

The song after the instrumental, “The Big Wheel” (sixth), refers semi-autobiographically to a kid who does a “slow fade” from a “ready-made faith” and chases “something new to believe in.” Peart appreciated some of the symbolism and language of religion, but denied any specific autobiographical intent in this song:

“The Big Wheel” . . . seems to be autobiographical, but it’s really not. It’s where I’ve looked for a universal of that trade-off between innocence and experience, and that song certainly addresses that. Not in the circumstances of my own life so much, or if it is, it’s not important that it be autobiographical, that’s just by the by really. Very much I want to find universal things that others can relate to, and that’s a thing that’s part of everyone’s life, so I think that’s probably one reason why I’m drawn to it. And then so much of it is drawn from observing people around me too, so that becomes a factor in it too; how they responded to life, and how they take to it. How they adapt to that innocence and experience thing.<sup>35</sup>

The title of the following (seventh) song, “Heresy,” suggests that it might pick up on some of the themes of “The Big Wheel.” Instead, it reflects ideologically on the “wasted years” of the Cold War (“bombs and basement fallout shelters, all our lives at stake”) and the establishment of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and the former East Germany (“The counter-revolution at the counter of a store: people buy the things they want and borrow for a little more”).<sup>36</sup>

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similarity to art music derived from Lee and Lifeson’s computer-based, multi-sectional song-arranging techniques and not from an emulation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century variation technique.

The song preceding the instrumental, “Face Up” (fourth) begins with electric guitar arpeggios, active drumming, and minimal bass guitar. Repetitions of the same pattern add keyboards and Lee’s active bass. Similar music underlies the verses, then the chorus abandons the keyboards for a more hard rock sound. The bridge softens the texture considerably for introspective lyrics about the negatives and positives of being alone. The following brief, “free-wheeling” guitar solo suggests approval at the positive “spin” (literally) taken at the end of the bridge. Lifeson’s solo briefly approximates the revving of a car engine, although Peart may have had in mind bicycling. Lifeson’s engine-revving slightly resembles aspects of Rush’s well-known car song, “Red Barchetta” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> Neil Peart, *Roll the Bones* radio premiere broadcast, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Peart also addressed global issues of the latter days of the Cold War and of wealth vs. poverty in the lyrics for “Distant Early Warning” and “Red Lenses” (both on *Grace under Pressure*, 1984). The latter theme also appears in Peart’s lyrics for “Territories” (*Power Windows*, 1985).

“Heresy” begins with faded-in military drums, but its musical temperament otherwise uses a softer

The third-last song, “Ghost of a Chance,” functions as a kind of love song, an area that Peart addresses in only a few Rush songs. Peart explains his reluctance:

I’ve always shied away from love songs and even mentioning the word in songs because it’s so much cliché, and until I thought that I’d found a new way to approach it, or a new nuance of it to express, I was not going to write one of those kind of songs. “Ghost of a Chance” fits right in with my overall theme of randomness and contingency and so on, but at the same time it was a chance for me to write about love in a different way, of saying, “Here are all these things that we go through in life and the people we meet, it’s all by chance. And the corners we turn and the places we go and the people we meet there.” All those things are so random and yet through all of that people do meet each other, and if they work at it they can make that encounter last. So I’m saying there’s a ghost of a chance it can happen, and the odds are pretty much against it, but at the same time that ghost of a chance sometimes does come through and people do find each other and stay together.<sup>37</sup>

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rock style to suggest accommodation (“forgiving at last,” “saying goodbye to the past”). Lifeson used detuned folk rock, acoustic guitar sounds to parallel the song’s unusual political lyrics, and Peart incorporated a rhythmic element inspired by his travels in Africa. See William F. Miller, article-interview, “Neil Peart: In Search Of The Right Feel,” *Modern Drummer*, February 1994 (<http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0294.html>). This recalls the integration of world music elements into western popular music in the 1980s and early 1990s by Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, David Byrne, and others. Although Peart traveled in Africa and China mainly for reasons other than to experience non-western music, he sometimes performed informally with master drummers and other musicians. The Africans who heard this found it pleasantly surprising that a white North American bicycling through their village could play the drums so well. See Gehret, “To Be Totally Obsessed” *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994. Whether or not this in any way reunited rock with its “roots,” Rush’s occasional borrowings from world music contributed, in its own small way, to “diverse and converging patterns of cultural practice across the world.” Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (London: Polity, 1996; reprint, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 176. On this point, Negus also refers to Ian Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994) and George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994).

Related “world” ideas appear in Hugh Syme’s album cover, including a wall of dice of which the backdrop of the upper portion shows the number three on each surface. The rest of the wall spells out the band name and the album name in contrasting colours and numbers. In front, a boy (Michael Vander Veldt; this information derived from Toronto music show *The New Music*, 11 November 1991) has just kicked the head of a skeleton along a sidewalk. The back cover includes three bones, presumably part of the same skeleton, flying through a window in a segment of the dice-wall from the front cover. Peart suggests that the album art references European symbols and techniques:

The cover art [of *Roll the Bones*] reflects a style of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch painting called vanitas, in which symbols, such as the skull (and also candles, books flowers, playing cards, etc.), were used to remind the good Netherlanders of life’s brevity, and the ultimate transience of all material things and sensual pleasures. (Neil Peart, Rush Backstage Club newsletter, 4 November 1993.)

Otherwise, the album also refers to African and African-American imagery to some extent.

<sup>37</sup> Neil Peart, *Roll the Bones* radio premiere broadcast, 1991.

In response an interviewer's comment about the "twangy—almost rockabilly" guitar riff at the beginning of this song, Lee and Lifeson responded:

Lee: "Yeah, the spy part."

Lifeson: "I used my PRS [Paul Reed Smith electric guitar] for that."

Lee: "I think you strengthened the riffs. Originally it was a straight double-track. You went back and put on a third, slightly heavier track."<sup>38</sup>

By "the spy part," Lee presumably means the blue-notes (F-naturals) peculiar to Lifeson's version of the song's main chord progression: E minor, D major, B minor.<sup>39</sup>

For the final (tenth) song, "You Bet Your Life," the band attempted to emulate the kind of ebb-and-flow energy that effectively energized certain mainstream hard rock songs of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Lifeson explains his technique in accomplishing this:

[I synced the guitar delay to the tempo] originally, then Stephen [W. Taylor, the album's engineer] added a little bit more DDL to one of the other cleaner guitars to give it more energy. The song seemed quite [the] same as we went through different sections—something was lacking. We wanted to get the first verse seesawing a little more. [The] Edge, from U2, is a pro at that.<sup>40</sup>

The song also includes a section of rhythmically "chanted," mantra-like recitation of numerous socio-cultural contradictions:

anarchist reactionary running-dog revisionist hindu muslim catholic creation/evolutionist  
rational romantic mystic cynical idealist minimal expressionist postmodern neosymbolist  
armchair rocket scientist graffiti existentialist deconstruction primitive performance photo-realist  
bebop or a one-drop or a hip-hop lite-pop-metallist gold adult contemporary urban country capitalist

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<sup>38</sup> Widders-Ellis, "Rush Redefined," *Guitar Player*, November 1991.

<sup>39</sup> For the verses of "Neurotica" (ninth) Lee plays string-like synthesizer chords and bass pedals. Lee's real bass doubles the guitar riff in the bridge, but the keyboards also continue. The harmonic motion increases again for the keyboard-laden chorus, and a contrasting, wordless vocalise ("oh . . .") falls consistently in between Lee's main phrases of the lyrics. The semi-psychological lyrics address someone else's insecurity, losing of nerve, hiding in one's shell, and so on. The chorus uses a sequence of rhyming words, some real and some related to real words: neurotica, exotica, erotica, hypnotica, psychotica, chaotica. This recalls "Anagram (for Mongo)" on the previous album (*Presto*, 1989), but it also relates to two additional new songs.

<sup>40</sup> Widders-Ellis, "Rush Redefined," *Guitar Player*, November 1991.



However, this sort of speech-based technique more pervasively infuses later sections of the album's title song, "Roll the Bones" (placed third).<sup>41</sup>

### **"Roll the Bones" (*Roll the Bones*, 1991)**

"Roll the Bones" borrows African diasporic language for fate or change, and it also relates to the dice imagery used in the song. As Peart's lyrics put it: "We draw our own designs, but fortune has to make that frame" and "Fate is just the weight of circumstances." This updates Peart's lyrics for "Freewill" (*Permanent Waves*, 1980) from vaguely Randian atheistic individualism to vaguely left-wing agnostic libertarianism.<sup>42</sup> Loud, brass-like synthesizer stabs occasionally reinforce the verses' ambiguous spin on fate, and a similarly loud "organ" glissando introduces the somewhat funkier, bridge. The chorus then features some overdubbed vocals, comparatively subtle organ-like keyboard chords, and Lifeson's strummed acoustic guitar (present during 43% of the song).

Lifeson's electric guitar solo (accompanied by acoustic guitar) follows the second chorus, but as he "trails off," a drastic textural change occurs: electronic percussion (16%) replaces Peart's otherwise traditional drumming and a thumpy, synthesized bass line replaces Lee's bass playing. More strikingly, though, a digitally modified—and quite low—version of Lee's spoken voice presents Peart's eccentric approximation of rapping (at 3:11-3:41 and 3:51-4:12):

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<sup>41</sup> The band refers to similar, sampled voice effects on "Territories" (*Power Windows*, 1985). Lee also speaks a few of the lyrics on "Superconductor" (*Presto*, 1989).

<sup>42</sup> The line also suggests a reference to Rush's "Circumstances" (*Hemispheres*, 1978).

**“Roll the Bones” (“rap” section, 3:12-4:16):**

Jack, relax. Get busy with the facts.  
No zodiacs or almanacs. No maniacs in polyester slacks.  
Just the facts. Gonna kick some gluteus max. It’s a parallax, you dig?  
You move around; the small gets big. It’s a rig.  
It’s action, reaction, random interaction. So who’s afraid of a little abstraction?  
Can’t get no satisfaction from the facts?  
You better run, homeboy. A fact’s a fact from Nome to Rome, boy.  
[instrument-only reminiscence of the chorus, 3:41-3:51]  
What’s the deal? Spin the wheel.  
If the dice are hot, take a shot. Play your cards.  
Show us what you got, what you’re holding.  
If the cards are cold, don’t go folding. Lady Luck is golden.  
She favours the bold. That’s cold. Stop throwing stones.  
The night has a thousand saxophones.  
So get out there and rock and roll the bones. Get busy!<sup>43</sup>

Lifeson’s preceding guitar solo segues into the rap section, he continues to provide blues-derived “squeals” into the new section, and an instrumental version of the song’s hard rock chorus appears halfway through. All of this suggests that the band felt some ideological discomfort in referencing rap music in this way.

Lee explains that the band struggled with how best to approach this:

I like some rap things, but a lot I don’t like. I think there’s some of it that’s really well done . . . We couldn’t make up our minds really if we wanted to be influenced by rap or satirize it, so I think that song kind of falls between the cracks and in the end I think it came out to be neither, it came out to be something that is very much us. . . . There are certain elements of our sound that are kind of inimitable at this point.<sup>44</sup>

Peart elaborates:

I was hearing some of the better rap writers, among whom I would include . . . LL Cool J or Public Enemy . . . And it struck me that it must be a lot of fun to do that: all those internal rhymes and all that wordplay and everything. . . . [W]e did think of trying to get a real rapper in to do it, and we even experimented with female voices, and ultimately found that that treated version of Geddy’s voice was the most satisfying as creating the persona that we wanted to get across . . . a nice low frequency sound, and you could listen to it just as a musical passage without having to key in on the lyrics.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The song’s MTV-style video (and concert footage) features a skeleton head performing the rap.

<sup>44</sup> Schulte, “Rush: straight from the heart,” *Canadian Musician* 13.5 (1991).

<sup>45</sup> Neil Peart, *Roll the Bones* radio premiere broadcast, 1991. Peart also explains that the band considered asking Canadian singer-songwriter-guitarist Robbie Robertson (formerly of the Band) or U.K. comedian John Cleese (formerly of Monty Python) to derive soulful or comedic versions of the rap.

The band gave the rap a rather weird vocal sound, delayed the section's entrance until well into the song (3:11-4:12 of 5:30), inserted an instrumental reference to the song's much more rock-oriented chorus in between the rap's two phrases, and ended the song with repetitions of the song's hard rock chorus (eventually faded). This recalls the pseudo-reggae insertions and subsequent hard rock of the end of Rush's "The Spirit of Radio" (*Permanent Waves*, 1980). However, unlike the reggae/ska rhythmic elements in a few Rush songs circa 1981-84, the band did not pursue rap elements after 1991.

### ***Counterparts, 1993***

Rush changes direction like a hummingbird; each record explores new territories and redirects the band's sonic and musical focuses, without compromising the distinctive Rush style.<sup>46</sup>

-rock journalist Karl Coryat, 1993

There's nothing worse than a band [with] progressive tendencies sounding like some outcasts . . . [T]here was a concerted effort . . . to sound more current.<sup>47</sup>

We try to hold the "chops" side of our music in reserve and save it for the appropriate moment. But we always allow for that moment to exorcise those demons, and when the moment comes, we let it rip.<sup>48</sup>

-Geddy Lee, 1993

*Counterparts* (1993) reunited Rush with its 1985-87 co-producer Peter Collins,

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Interestingly, Lee's spoken sections for "Double Agent" (*Counterparts*, 1993) evoke Robertson's bluesy, southern-U.S.-influenced voice. The "Roll the Bones" rap section does not.

<sup>46</sup> Karl Coryat, article-interview, "Geddy Lee: Still Going!," *Bass Player*, December 1993. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/bp1293.html>

<sup>47</sup> "Rush—Astronomicon," *Seconds* (issue #25, 1994). See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/seconds94.html>.

On July 13, 1993 (about three months before the release of *Counterparts*), Geddy Lee sang the Canadian national anthem at the 64<sup>th</sup> annual Major League Baseball All-Star game at Camden Yards in Baltimore. (As a long-time baseball fan, Lee must have been thrilled.) Lee and Lifeson also later recorded "O Canada" for the soundtrack CD of *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999).

<sup>48</sup> Coryat, "Geddy Lee: Still Going!," *Bass Player*, December 1993.

but now, as with the two preceding studio albums co-produced with Rupert Hine, recorded in Canada. Only the occasional organ- or string-like elements of “Animate” (the opening song), the synthesizer chords and organ- and bell-sounds in the instrumental “Leave That Thing Alone” (ninth of eleven), and the piano near the end of “Cut to the Chase” (third) use synthesizer- or sampler-related elements more than incidentally.<sup>49</sup> The fourth song, “Nobody’s Hero,” uses prominent acoustic guitars as well as a string section, arranged and conducted by Michael Kamen.<sup>50</sup> It provides the main exception to the album’s rule of mainly featuring prominent electric guitar, bass, and drums. Rush stayed current largely by updating its pre-music-technology roots as a power trio. Thus, many songs on *Counterparts* sound something like certain elements of early 1990s hard alternative rock (e.g., Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and Soundgarden) or the progressive-oriented side of late-1980s and early-1990s hard rock and heavy metal (e.g., Dream Theater, Metallica, Pantera, and Queensrÿche).<sup>51</sup> Many such artists cited Rush as an influence, so the band may have wished to reciprocate.

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<sup>49</sup> Collins also produced Rush’s *Power Windows* (1985), *Hold Your Fire* (1987), and *Test for Echo* (1996).

<sup>50</sup> Among other things, Kamen founded and participated in the late-60s/early-70s rock/classical-oriented New York Rock & Roll Ensemble, worked with David Bowie in the 1970s, and later composed a number of film scores and film songs. He also arranged and conducted Metallica’s performances with the San Francisco Symphony (released as *S&M [Symphony & Metallica]*, 1999) and worked with Coldplay and members of the New York Philharmonic during the 2003 Grammy Awards ceremony.

Rush earlier used brass and string sections within a few songs released on *Power Windows* (1985) and *Hold Your Fire* (1987). Also, Geddy Lee’s solo album, *My Favourite Headache* (2000), includes several elaborate string parts, co-arranged by Lee and Ben Mink. Lee also plays guitar and piano on certain songs.

<sup>51</sup> The band selected Kevin “Caveman” Shirley, a South African hard rock mixer, engineer, and producer (Aerosmith, the Black Crowes, etc.), to record *Counterparts*.

In discussing this album, Lee said about the continuing funk/groove influence:

I wanted to make the tracks groove better, with more emphasis on rhythmic bass playing, as opposed to the standard 'rock' style. Rather than just root the stuff, I wanted to help make the music move. In my formative years [ca 1968-69], I played a lot of funk-oriented stuff, but then we got into rock, with a straighter kind of a groove, and when we got into the more progressive stuff in the Seventies, there was no funk or groove at all. It was all math. The groove thing really appeals to us now. The marriage of rhythm and heavy rock is exciting to me; it makes it a little more seductive.<sup>52</sup>

Around the same time, Lee mentioned his interest in younger rock bands with actively rhythmic bass playing, such as Primus (which opened for Rush in 1992 and 1994), the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Soundgarden.<sup>53</sup>

Peart refers to his drumming on the opening song, "Animate," as only seemingly simpler than many of his earlier efforts. To an interviewer's comment that he seems to have "simplified [his] drum arrangements to something more tasteful and concise," Peart replied:

I guess it is progress in a way that the drum parts are more seamless now and smoother, but they're no less complex and certainly no less difficult to play. I was thinking that on stage the last show that "Animate," the opening song on the new album, is just as hard to play as "Tom Sawyer" [the opening song of *Moving Pictures*, 1981], for instance, which is more of an overtly complex drum part. Over the years I've spent more time on details and ironing out things, so it's a deceptive simplicity, and the way it should be, really. You want to take the extremely difficult and make it look easy. . . . The same thing could be said about lyrics, that they're less abstract and cerebral . . .<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Aledort, "Guitarist Alex Lifeson and Bassist Geddy Lee," *Guitar World*, Feb. 1994. The album's tonal areas distribute quite evenly among D, A, and G and/or E-related areas.

<sup>53</sup> See Coryat, "Geddy Lee: Still Going!," *Bass Player*, December 1993. Members of these bands also sometimes mentioned Rush in interviews. For example, in a 1999 *Rolling Stone* interview, one member of the Red Hot Chili Peppers joked about "attending" Fairfax (L.A.) High School's parking lot, smoking pot, and listening to Rush eight-tracks.

<sup>54</sup> Gehret, "To Be Totally Obsessed," *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994.

On the other hand, Peart describes the opening song's lyrics *as* abstract:

“Animate” is self-reflective but . . . in an abstract sense. I got excited about Carl Jung's idea about the male and female counterparts within an individual and I thought that was pretty interesting; and, without getting all iron-jawed about it, I always felt a strong feminine side in myself, so I figured that that was something that came alive for me. I dressed it up in a lot of imagery from biblical things and Camille Paglia—a lot of primeval, mother-type images.<sup>55</sup>

According to Peart, for “Animate” he:

used a basic R&B [rhythm-and-blues] rhythm that I played back in my early days [late-1960s/early-1970s], coupled with that hypnotic effect that a lot of the British bands of the turn of the '90s had—bands like Curve and Lush. The middle section of the tune is the result of the impact African music has had on me, although it wasn't a specific African rhythm.<sup>56</sup>

The band also ended up naming the album after the song's idea of counterparts.<sup>57</sup> In a related move towards “tastefulness” and “conciseness,” Geddy Lee discussed his greatly increased participation on lead and background vocals into the early 1990s:

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<sup>55</sup> Neil Peart, *Canadian Musician*, 1994, 37. Peart eventually named his “feminine side” Gaia. See *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), 342.

<sup>56</sup> Miller, “Neil Peart,” *Modern Drummer*, February 1994.

<sup>57</sup> Once again, the album art also reflects the album's theme. Syme's front cover displays the rather obvious counterpart of a diagrammed nut and bolt. This sparseness reflects the album's comparatively hard-sounding style, but it also indicates the male-female counterparts examined on parts of the album. Syme's back cover shows a broken triangle with a Pac-Man like shape (a circle with a “mouth” cut out) facing each side. The three faces thus complete the broken triangle, referring simultaneously to the band and to the album title. *Counterparts'* elaborate inner artwork features well over one hundred additional visual and textual counterparts (i.e., pairs and trios). These include the symbols for yin and yang, male and female, Adam and Eve, King and Queen face cards, sun and moon, and heads and tails (of a Canadian quarter). They also include Rock-Paper-Scissors (reprising inner album artwork from *Presto*, 1989), a mortar and pestle, a musical note and a rest, a bow and arrow, a tortoise and a hare (and other animal pairs), See-Hear-Say no evil, a home and visitor sign (one of several indications of Geddy Lee's fascination with baseball), happy and sad pantomime masks, money and heart, and the Three Stooges (a frequent, self-effacing Rush symbol). The artwork also includes visual puns on a drum set, a sink fixture (“counter parts”), and the inner workings of a watch.

For the first ten years [i.e., recordings made from 1973 to 1982] my singing was always “the last overdub.” The voice was just another instrument. But over the last seven or eight years [i.e., recordings made from 1986-87 to 1992-93] the songs have been written around the vocal melody, so it’s usually the first thing I write. Neil also puts a lot of energy into writing lyrics, which allow me room to play with the vocal. And I’m not afraid of harmonies; in fact, I’m really intrigued by the idea of writing them.<sup>58</sup>

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Lee had developed an interest in writing strong vocal material early in the songwriting phase.

### **“Stick It Out” (*Counterparts*, 1993)**

The second song, “Stick It Out,” most prominently demonstrates the album’s tendency towards stylistic/overdriven hardness and textural sparseness. In the verses, Lee and Lifeson’s distorted riff alternates with Lee’s vocal phrases. The title/chorus phrase suggests a play-on-words of encouraging the arrogant display of sticking out one’s tongue (or perhaps one’s middle finger) and encouraging endurance—to “stick it out.” The verses rhythmically feature sparse but highly complex cross-rhythms, especially between the main riff and the rest of the music (see Example 5.2). The song contains only a small amount of subtle keyboards (10%), and the frequent backing vocals (33%) provide a more visceral emotional resonance.

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<sup>58</sup> Andy Aledort, review-interview with Lifeson and Lee, “Guitarist Alex Lifeson and Bassist Geddy Lee revisit their stripped down, power trio roots on *Counterparts*, the strongest Rush release in years,” *Guitar World* (February 1994). See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/gw0294.html>.

**Example 5.2: Verse 1 Opening of “Stick It Out” (with Riff), 0:15-0:40**

[the drum part note-heads do not indicate actual pitches;

“o” means open hi-hat, “c” means closed hi-hat]; continued below

♩ = 120

[measure 9]

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each containing a vocal line, a guitar line, and a drum line. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is 120 beats per minute. The first system (measures 9-10) features a vocal line with a triplet of eighth notes on the word "Trust" and a guitar line with a triplet of eighth notes labeled "overdriven timbre". The drum line shows a hi-hat pattern starting with an open hi-hat (o) followed by two closed hi-hats (c). The second system (measures 11-12) has a vocal line with a triplet of eighth notes on "re-strained" and a guitar line with a triplet of eighth notes labeled "plus feedback". The drum line continues with a "block (on 2 and 4)" pattern. The third system (measures 13-14) has a vocal line with the words "tions" and "must be care-ful-ly trained." and a guitar line with a triplet of eighth notes labeled "plus feedback". The drum line continues with the "block (on 2 and 4)" pattern.

Trust to your in - stinct,

overdriven timbre

hi-hats:  
o c c

if it's safe - ly re - strained. Light - ning re - ac -

plus feedback

block (on 2 and 4)

tions must be care - ful - ly trained.

plus feedback



The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of five staves. The top staff is the vocal melody in treble clef, with lyrics: "Heat of the mo - ment: curse of the young." The second staff is the guitar part in treble clef, featuring a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The third staff is the bass line in bass clef, also with a complex rhythmic pattern. The fourth staff is labeled "ride cymbal" and shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The fifth staff is labeled "toms" and shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

In an aural pun, Lifeson accompanies the words “safely restrained” and “carefully trained” with controlled feedback on his overdriven, sustained Fs. The vocal triplets on “trust to your (instinct)” and “safely re(strained)” provide a similar “calming” effect. Moreover, much of the song features a careful controlling of the main riff’s F/B (augmented fourth) dissonance. For example, a compressed (one-bar) version of the riff also underlies the chorus, but it moves everything ahead by a quarter-note and decorates the pitch B in a trill-like sixteenth-note figure also containing lower neighbouring As. The A in that figure also leaps up into the octave descent on D that initiates each bar. (This replaces the A that leads to the Bs and Fs in the original riff.)

Regarding one of the verses, Peart refers to Latin influences and to a “Weather Report-type [jazz-rock fusion] effect.” He also refers to the “tricky turn-arounds in the ride cymbal pattern, where it goes from downbeat to upbeat accents—anything I could think of to make it my own.”<sup>59</sup> The last five words of this quote—“to make it my own”—indicate something of Peart’s conception of staying musically current and yet sticking it out as something that still sounds like Rush. Peart once referred to Rush as a

<sup>59</sup> Miller, “Neil Peart,” *Modern Drummer*, February 1994.

“big musical sponge,” meaning that the band “react[ed] to the times in a genuinely interested fashion” rather than jumping bandwagons.<sup>60</sup> He later clarified:

The word [“sponge” is] not attractive, but the metaphor is. We absolutely are [a sponge]. . . . The music around us [is] a vote of affirmation . . . [I]t’s always an influence, whether it’s electronic dance music or world beat or ska music from the late seventies. All those things creep in, and if it’s something that we like, we’ll want to use it, and any style of music that any of us has ever liked has found a way to sneak into Rush somehow.<sup>61</sup>

Peart means that Rush always “translates” other music back into its own music.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Malcolm Dome, “Interview With Neil Peart,” *Metal Hammer*, 25 April 1988. See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/mh0488.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Hamilton, interview with Neil Peart, “Counterparts,” *Canadian Musician*, 16.1 (1994), 37-38.

<sup>62</sup> As with the solos for “Bravado” and “Ghost of a Chance” (both on *Roll the Bones*, 1991), on “Cut to the Chase” (the third song) Lifeson’s colleagues convinced him to retain his song demo “throwaway solos.” Peart’s lyrics apply various images of energy and potential from science, sport, and nature (e.g., combustion, archery, and desire) to the idea of an individual’s possibilities for change and development. The *middle* section seemingly comes to terms with *middle* age, such as “I’m young enough to remember the future and the way things ought to be.” (Peart turned 40 in September of 1992, and his colleagues turned 40 in the late-summer of 1993, just before the album’s release in October of that year.) A transition just after this middle section self-consciously bounces the word “cut” back and forth between the left and right speakers. This technological effect and the related compression effect on that word slightly suggest the emerging use of such techniques in DJ, re-mix, and trip-hop music of the 1990s. Thus, it also suggests a slight nod towards “staying current.”

For “Between Sun & Moon” (the fifth song, with its lyrics about natural and personal “spaces between”), Peart based his lyrics on a poem by Pye Dubois, a Canadian lyricist who also contributed to Rush’s “Tom Sawyer” (*Moving Pictures*, 1981), “Force Ten” (*Hold Your Fire*, 1987), and “Test for Echo” (*Test for Echo*, 1996). Lifeson explained his inspiration for certain guitar sounds: “Pete Townshend [of the Who] can make an acoustic sound so heavy and powerful. I’ve always admired that. On ‘Between Sun & Moon’ there’s a musical bridge before the solo that’s very Who-ish.” See A. Widders-Ellis, “Profile: Alex Lifeson—Rush strips down,” *Guitar Player*, Dec. 1993, 21-2. He described the song as a “tribute to the ‘60s,” but he also enthused about early-1990s bands, such as Curve, Pearl Jam, and Alice in Chains.

## “Love” Songs

Following up on “Ghost of a Chance” (*Roll the Bones*, 1991) and, to a lesser extent, this album’s “Animate,” Peart says of “Alien Shore” (the album’s sixth song):

I was thinking about these discussions among friends that I’ve had where, when we talk about gender differences or about racial differences, we can talk about them dispassionately because we were . . . generous, well-travelled people who counted all these different people among our friends and equals. I realize that these subjects are too dangerous in many cases to discuss because they are so freighted with prejudice and misunderstanding. I wanted to take that on and put it into a personal context of a conversation that ‘you and I are different but we don’t have a problem with that.’<sup>63</sup>

The “busy” character of the music texturally parallels the song’s particular slant on the complexity of sexual and racial differences: “we reject these narrow attitudes.” The lyrics also reference U.S. contexts: “holding truths to be self-evident” and “electing each other President.” About “The Speed of Love” (seventh) Peart says:

[The appearance of first-person lyrics] is a bit of a red herring almost. . . . For some of the songs, the situations are entirely invented, like “Cold Fire” [the tenth song] or “[The] Speed of Love” . . . . I went through great pains with those songs to warm them up in different ways and to warm up the whole concept of our lives being dominated by chance. So, in this case, with the dualities, I didn’t want to present just black and white themes.<sup>64</sup>

Peart also suggests:

“The Speed of Love” is kind of mid-tempo, a more sensitive rock song. [It] probably took me the longest [of the songs on *Counterparts*] to find just the right elements I wanted to have in a drum part. What made it a challenge is that I wanted the feel and the transitions between sections to be just right. I played [it] over and over, refining it until I was satisfied. I don’t think a listener will hear all the work that went into that track.<sup>65</sup>

Peart spent considerable time working out his drum parts, and the last sentence here

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<sup>63</sup> Hamilton, “Counterparts,” *Canadian Musician*, 16.1 (1994), 37.

<sup>64</sup> Hamilton, “Counterparts,” *Canadian Musician*, 16.1 (1994), 37.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, “Neil Peart,” *Modern Drummer*, February 1994.

seems to suggest a slight frustration with the band's fans. However, the interview took place in *Modern Drummer*, a U.S.-based musician-oriented magazine for which Peart served as an adviser. Thus, Peart probably meant that musician-fans (i.e., listener-drummers) *would* be able to hear his "work."

Like "The Speed of Love," "Cold Fire" (tenth of eleven) uses first-person lyrics to address the topic of heterosexual relationships. Lifeson describes the song as follows: "I think there's a great balance between the romantic picture on the one side, and how the music is sympathetic to those lyrics, and then the other point of view, which is much colder."<sup>66</sup> Peart explains his reluctance to write love songs:

Along with Frank Zappa, I think that love songs are not only dumb, they're also actively harmful. They invent this fantasy that people expect their own relationships to live up to, and when they don't they result in divorces and low self-esteem and sense of failure and all that, so it's not healthy. Trying to express how a relationship really works, I invented characters and invented a situation and personalized it. Made it like a conversation between two people, of whom the woman is the smarter of the two, and made a complex little personal story.<sup>67</sup>

Peart took music, lyrics, *and* relationships seriously, so one might wish to differentiate his approach to love songs as "relationship songs," compared to rock music's much more common emphasis on "sex songs."

The album also contains additional songs with emotional content. The eighth song, "Double Agent," lurches among a number of textures and rhythms. It also includes Lee's spoken voice sections, which stylistically reference the blues as opposed to the rap of "Roll the Bones" (*Roll the Bones*, 1991). For example:

**"Double Agent" (2:09-31):** On the edge of sleep, I heard voices behind the door.  
The known and the nameless, familiar and faceless,  
My angels and my demons at war.  
Which one will lose depends on what I choose or maybe which voice I ignore.

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<sup>66</sup> Alex Lifeson, *Counterparts* radio premiere broadcast, 1993.

<sup>67</sup> Gehret, "To Be Totally Obsessed" *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994.

Peart also inserted elements from his reading:

“Wilderness of mirrors” is a phrase from T. S. Eliot’s *Gerontion* and was also applied by former CIA counter-intelligence chief James Jesus Angleton to describe the world of espionage—hence the twist on “Double Agent,” reflecting the clandestine workings of dreams and the subconscious.<sup>68</sup>

“Leave That Thing Alone” (ninth) functions as a sequel to the similar instrumental “Where’s My Thing?” (*Roll the Bones*, 1991). Its multi-sectional form and incorporation of synthesizers and funk-referencing rhythms somewhat recall its predecessor. The album’s closing anthem, “Everyday Glory” (eleventh), although not a love song, applies personalized situations to the idea of role models:

[A]ll we need is a good example from people. “Everyday Glory” contains that thought as well. That one spark of light to set an example is really the best thing that you can do. Being a parent myself, too, that’s my law of parenthood. Number one: “don’t warp them out” and number two: “set a good example.”<sup>69</sup>

This sentiment reprises ideas from the album’s fourth song, “Nobody’s Hero.”

### **“Nobody’s Hero” (*Counterparts*, 1993)**

“Nobody’s Hero” takes a difficult, and arguably politically incorrect, view of heroes. Peart’s lyrics suggest that we should not, for example, *necessarily* interpret as a hero a gay man who dies of AIDS (Verse 1) or a brutalized young woman (the Verse 2 vignette suggests she was raped and/or murdered). They also suggest that in such matters we should certainly let a “shadow cross our hearts” and “try to hold some faith in the goodness of humanity.” Peart carefully explained in interviews that these two main vignettes involved real people he knew or knew about:

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<sup>68</sup> Neil Peart, *Counterparts* tour booklet, 1993-4.

<sup>69</sup> Hamilton, “Counterparts,” *Canadian Musician*, 16.1 (1994), 37.

[T]he first verse [is] about the first gay person that I knew and what a great example he set for me for what a gay person is, and prevented me from ever becoming homophobic. And [concerning] the second verse I happened to know this family that this terrible tragedy had happened to, and I thought of what a hole in their lives the girl had left behind. These were people who had more impact around than any hero, but at the same time in our Western way, they were nobody's hero.<sup>70</sup>

However, he never quite clarifies whether or not they should be held up as heroes.

At the end of the two folk-like verses, featuring Lifeson's strummed acoustic guitar and Lee's "authentic" baritone chest voice (i.e., exclusively featuring them in Verse 1), the line "But he's [or she's] nobody's hero" elides from the word "hero" into the musically more emphatic choruses. The choruses switch to rock style, including electric guitar, bass, drums, and higher vocals, but they still mostly retain the acoustic guitar as well. They begin with brief descriptions of unambiguous heroes (or role models), such as: someone who saves a drowning child, cures a wasting disease, lands a crippled airplane, solves great mysteries, voices reason against the howling mob, or even just does one's best job in his or her situation. The choruses end with examples of unambiguous *anti*-heroes (i.e., conventional heroes), including: a handsome actor (who sometimes plays the *role* of a hero), soul-selling glamour stars (female *and* male), and a champion athlete (even when he or she plays a perfect game). Significantly, these sections musically combine Lifeson's acoustic and electric guitars throughout. Moreover, to further amplify the textural/textual split between the two types of heroes, the choruses more prominently feature Michael Kamen's string arrangement. (It probably replaced a sampled or synthesized string part in the original "Boys' Camp" versions of the song, and in a few sections subtle keyboards may, in fact, be present.) After the first chorus, Lifeson's first electric guitar solo, also subtly accompanied by the song's nearly pervasive acoustic guitar, facilitates the transition to the acoustically accompanied Verse 2. After a second,

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<sup>70</sup> Gehret, "To Be Totally Obsessed" *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994.

longer electric guitar solo, the chorus—including the textural/textual split (and strings)—features heavily at the end of the song (including the fade-out).

### ***Test for Echo, 1996***

Rush released a new studio album about every year from 1974 to 1984 (ten albums) and every other year from 1985 to 1993 (five albums). For each album, the band averaged 5-6 months writing, arranging, rehearsing, and recording and 6-7 months touring (plus frequent interviews).<sup>71</sup> The band also assembled live albums in 1976, 1981, and 1989. Thus, from the early summer of 1994 until mid-fall of 1995 the band took a well-deserved 17-month sabbatical in order to pursue other activities.<sup>72</sup> The band then reconvened to write and record its sixteenth studio album, *Test for Echo*, as with *Counterparts* (1993) co-produced by U.K. producer Peter Collins and recorded (largely) in Toronto.

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<sup>71</sup> From 1990 to 1994, Rush's opening acts included Mr. Big, Voivod, Eric Johnson, Vinnie Moore, Primus, and Candlebox. Rush's home shows at Maple Leaf Gardens paired them with major, younger Canadian colleagues the Tragically Hip and I Mother Earth.

<sup>72</sup> Between *Counterparts* and its subsequent tour (1993-94) and *Test for Echo* (1996-97), Peart produced two Buddy Rich (1917-87) tribute albums: *Burning for Buddy: A Tribute to the Music of Buddy Rich, Vol. 1* (1994) and *Burning for Buddy: A Tribute to the Music of Buddy Rich, Vol. 2* (released in 1997). Various artists, including Peart and numerous additional rock and jazz drummers, recorded these at Bearsville Studios in central New York state. 1979-82 Rush engineer and 1998 (live) and 2001-02 (studio) Rush co-producer Paul Northfield engineered the albums, and Rush's long-term album artist Hugh Syme created the covers. A video for each volume also appeared in 2000. For Rich's official website, run by his daughter, see <http://www.buddyrich.com>.

Also in the mid-1990s, Peart wrote *The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa* (East Lawrencetown, NS: Pottersfield Press, 1996). Hugh Syme designed the book's artwork. In 1996, Peart released his instructional drumming video, *Neil Peart: A Work in Progress* (DCI). He based the video around his contributions to *Test for Echo* (1996) and around the reworking, ca 1994-96, of his drumming technique based on input from jazz drummer and Buddy Rich associate, Freddie Gruber. Syme created the video's cover design, which he based partly on his artwork for *Test for Echo*.

In 1995, Alex Lifeson made the "solo" album *Victor* (released in early 1996) with various non-Rush colleagues. Geddy Lee and his wife Nancy had a baby girl in 1994.

On *Test for Echo* (1996), only brief sections of “Time and Motion,” “Resist,” and “Limbo” (the instrumental) use synthesizers or samplers more than incidentally. Moreover, unlike all six of the band’s studio albums from 1984 to 1993, no external keyboardist or programmer receives credit on this album. Many songs instead feature Lifeson’s elaborately layered guitar sounds to support a prominent, memorable vocal melody. Although Lee and Lifeson’s music for this album tends to use technology even less than on Rush’s albums from 1989 to 1993, Peart’s lyrics nonetheless sometimes address technology. However, such lyrics tend towards ambivalence, thus suggesting a symbiosis with the album’s stylistic undertaking.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hugh Syme’s cover shows three tiny figures, presumably representing the members of the band, climbing a huge human-shaped rock structure in a barren Arctic tundra. The Inuit traditionally used Inukshuks (meaning “in the image of man”) in hunting practices and to mark trails and geographical directions. In Rush’s context, this represents the band’s long, complicated engagement with rock music. The CD’s back cover technologically updates the front cover’s ancient symbol with three large satellite dishes in the same Arctic tundra. The first page of the CD booklet features a digitally altered ancient map of the northern hemisphere (in Latin, but modified to refer to Rush). Each song lyric also receives a visual treatment:

- a photograph of a wolf howling at the full moon (“Test for Echo”)
- an Inuit or Inuit-like artwork of a dog-sled team (“Driven”)
- the Earth appears ripped in two; the album cover shows through (“Half the World”)
- the northern lights (“The Color of Right”)
- an artistically archaic globe and the coupling of two train cars (“Time and Motion”)
- the lunar monolith from the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (“Totem”)
- adolescent pictures of aspiring rockers Peart, Lifeson, and Lee (“Dog Years”);
- a faint sketch of the cover’s Inukshuk (an adolescent version of the eventual version?);
- dog shown wearing “Rush Limbo” dog tag (song #10/“Limbo” is instrumental)
- the skeleton of a sunken ship (“Virtuality”—the Internet as “mariners adrift”)
- the cover’s Inukshuk, now atop a mountain and with a “No-U-Turn” sign (“Resist”)
- Inuit sculptors carving a rock sculpture; plus, carved onto a rock: “if you want something done right . . . just forget it” (“Carve Away the Stone”)

The last (i.e., credits) page of the CD booklet includes a snowman family of three.

Syme also directed the textured-surface artwork of the two-CD Rush anthology, *Chronicles* (Mercury/Anthem, 1991). The cover of *Retrospective I 1974-1980* (Mercury/Anthem, 1997) features an art gallery-like image, by another Canadian artist—Dan Hudson, of Syme’s man-against-star cover for *2112* (1976). Syme provided a parallel, framed artwork of three fingerprints (one for each band member) for *Retrospective II 1981-1987* (also Mercury/Anthem, 1997). Syme places a sweeper-janitor in both covers, but the custodian (probably representing Syme himself) only admires Hudson’s (1974-80) painting, not Syme’s (1981-87) painting. The CD booklets also include the relevant original album covers (by Syme, except for the first two) in frames elsewhere on the same gallery wall. Syme includes the 1974-80 anthology cover, including Hudson’s painting, as the last entry along the gallery wall in the 1981-87



### **“Test for Echo” (*Test for Echo*, 1996)**

Peart co-wrote the lyrics of the album’s opening title song, “Test for Echo,” with occasional Rush collaborator Pye Dubois.<sup>74</sup> The song addresses reality-based crime TV: “nail-biting ‘hood boys in borrowed ties and jackets.” The song also makes some reference to the 1995 O.J. Simpson murder trial (“the showcase trial on TV”) that took place just as the band began to write the songs for this album. Musically, certain parts of the song recall the frantic tone of “Chain Lightning” (*Presto*, 1989) and of “Double Agent” (*Counterparts*, 1993). The song contrasts its main moderate/cross-rhythmic main gesture (wide-ranging, undulating, and varied through modally mixed chords) with a rhythmically complex second gesture (narrow in range and somewhat frantic-sounding), a cut-time/harmonically slower verse section, a claustrophobic- or paranoid-sounding chromatic ascent, and related material. These gestures, including some transpositions, underlie the song’s various vocal and instrumental sections and encapsulate the lyrics’ ambivalence towards society’s simultaneous wide-eyed fascination and revulsion for the media. The song also seems to encapsulate “reality TV,” perhaps especially the disturbingly popular show “Cops.”

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anthology. (The imagery seems appropriate given that Rush often visited art galleries and museums in its concert tour cities.) In a related vein, Rush agreed that Mercury Records could release a new anthology in 2003 (a single CD covering 1974 to 1987) but only if they hired Hugh Syme to create the album art.

<sup>74</sup> *Test for Echo* credits the words and music to Lee, Lifeson, and Peart, with the exception of the opening song, which it credits to Lee, Lifeson, Peart, and Dubois. Peart probably wrote or co-wrote most of the lyrics, but Lee and/or Lifeson might have written or contributed to some of them. (Both wrote lyrics on several early Rush albums and on their 2000 and 1996 solo albums, respectively.) The album’s transcription folio retains the joint words/music authorship claim, as do all songs—even ones written before 1996—appearing on *Different Stages* (live, 1998). *Vapor Trails* (2002) reverts to the usual procedure of Lee and Lifeson credited with the music and Peart credited with the words.

## Further Echoes

The second song, “Driven,” varies significantly in texture among its several sections. The verses feature a distorted progressive/hard guitar riff that alternates among 4/4, 3/4, and 7/8 time signatures. The band’s live performances of the song feature Lee’s bass guitar solo, which provides a sense of the riff’s origin in jamming. (Live performances in 2002 also included film elements of the song’s manic and humourous music video, featuring “little people” racing miniature race cars.) The studio version includes three tracks of bass guitar, and the song’s bridge features strummed acoustic guitars. The chorus and the middle feature more mainstream rock style, the latter in a half-time feel: “Driven to the margin of error. Driven to the edge of control.” Although not as texturally sparse, parts of this song thus musically and lyrically somewhat recall “Stick It Out” (*Counterparts*, 1993). Responding to an interviewer’s comment about the band’s continuing, partial interest in underlying funk- and groove-oriented playing, Lee self-effacingly described the band’s success as “about as funky as white Canadians get.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Dawdy, “You Can’t Hurry Change,” *Basics* 6.2 (1996). “Half the World” (third) provides a “camera eye,” perhaps “satellite-cam,” view of some of our world’s complexities, such as “Half the world gives while the other half takes.” Concerning the song’s stylistic compromise of several Rush tendencies, Lee suggests:

Rush is always torn between its more complex aggressive side and its softer side. Even though this song [“Half the World”] is not soft, it’s melodic, so I put it in that other category. To me, this is one example where I think we were able to marry slightly edgier sound with that nice, melodic thing, so I was really pleased with this song.”

Geddy Lee, *Test for Echo* radio premiere broadcast, 5 September 1996. Lee also said:

“Half The World” is . . . a concise song without being wimpy or syrupy. It’s got a little bit of everything: nice melody, and yet it’s still aggressive. It’s hard for us to write that kind of song, really. You’d have to go back to “Closer to the Heart” (*A Farewell to Kings*, 1977) to find an example of that.

Myers, “Rush Put Themselves To The ‘Test,’” *Canadian Musician*, 1996 no. 6, 39. The older song applies the band’s melodic/aggressive stylistic balance to espouse socio-economic diversity among individuals (e.g., “You can be the captain, and I will draw the chart”). By comparison, “Half the World” applies this stylistic balance to macro/global contexts of socio-political intolerance, economic/industrial disparity, and

The opening/middle/ending instrumental section of “Time and Motion” (fifth) prominently features alternations between 5/4 and 12/8. In the verses, the band “smooths out” the oddity of this alternation into 6/4. The lyrics apply principles from science and nature to the human condition:

**“Time and Motion” Middle (in 5/4, repeated once, 3:02-36):**  
The mighty ocean dances with the moon.  
The silent forest echoes with the loon.

**Verse 3 (in 6/4, 4:00-40):**  
Time and motion. Live and love and dream.  
Eyes connect like interstellar beams.  
Superman in Supernature needs all the comfort he can find.  
Spontaneous emotion and the long enduring kind.

“Loon” refers to the northern lake bird so common in Canada, but it also suggests “loony” (derived from “lunatic”) and/or the Canadian nickname of the nation’s one-dollar coin: “loonie” (introduced in 1987 and featuring a loon). One of Peart’s residences sits alongside a lake in rural Quebec, so he may have been thinking of a combination of at least two of the meanings (i.e., himself as “loony”). In the context of the lyrics, “Superman” suggests the term’s origin in Nietzsche, not in comics. In his lifetime, Peart probably spent a lot more time reading the former than the latter.

“Totem” (sixth) oddly embraces no religion by mentioning aspects of quite a few of them, such as Judeo-Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, paganism, and animism. The song similarly assembles contradictory musical styles, ironically quoting

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post-colonialism. The song’s video treats this more simply, with a fence separating Peart from Lee and Lifeson, which visually acknowledges the “Boys’ Camp” manner in which the band composes its songs—written “separately together.” Neil Peart, quoted in Gehret, “To Be Totally Obsessed” *Aquarian Weekly*, 9 March 1994.

“The Color of Right” (fourth) suggests that goodness and truth become coloured by rightness, by which Peart presumably means political correctness. Before 1996, Peart used British/Canadian spellings, such as “colour” and “honour.” However, he probably felt compelled to fly in the face of his own conventions in such a song. In the last two lines of the chorus, Peart also applies concepts from physics to his sociological problematising of rightness. In addition, the first verse refers to the narrator’s own “sense of mission and the sense of what is right.” Thus, the narrator even seems to implicate himself.

the title of the African-American spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and also using vaguely Celtic music. Of “Totem,” Lifeson says:

I created a soundscape by using harmonics with a kind of Celtic melody over it that’s quite distant. In the song, in terms of dynamics, it’s a really beautiful shift. Listening to it in cans [i.e., with headphones], there’s this line “angels and demons inside my head” that was very visual to me. It’s almost angelic. You can sort of see this imagery swirling around.”<sup>76</sup>

The song also implicates the mass media in propagating religiosity: “Media messiahs preying on my fears. Pop culture prophets playing in my ears.” This suggests something along the lines of pop culture as a religion *and* an “opiate of the masses.”<sup>77</sup>

“Virtuality” (eighth) addresses the Internet. The chorus seems almost annoyingly optimistic, yet the verses and bridges suggest the artificiality of such a virtual reality:

**“Virtuality” Verse 2 (1:36-52):**

Astronauts in the weightlessness of pixellated space  
Exchange graffiti with a disembodied race.

**Bridge 2 (2:00-15):**

I can save the universe in a grain of sand.  
I can hold the future in my virtual hand.

**Chorus (2:24-57):**

Net boy, net girl: send your signal ‘round the world.  
Let your fingers walk and talk and set you free.  
Net boy, net girl: send your impulse ‘round the world.  
Put your message in a modem and throw it in the Cyber Sea.

Especially at phrase-ends during the song’s verses, Lee’s bass notes contradict Lifeson’s guitar: such as A vs. E7, B $\flat$  vs. F7, G-natural vs. E major, and G vs. A sus. These

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<sup>76</sup> Myers, “Rush Put Themselves To The ‘Test,’” *Canadian Musician*, 1996 no. 6, 35, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Of “Dog Years” (seventh) Peart says that he wrote the whimsical lyrics:  
right when we got together . . . after quite a long break apart. We did a little celebrating the first night, and the following day I was a bit the worse for wear . . . I sat down all muzzy-headed like that and started trying to stitch words together . . . “Dog Years” . . . came out of that kind of mentality, and born of observations over the years too, of looking at my dog thinking, ‘What’s going through his brain?’ and I would think, ‘Just a low-level zzzzz static: ‘food, walk, the basic elemental things.’ When I look at my dog that’s how I see his brainwaves moving. . . . I say, ‘I don’t think he’s thinking about too much.’

-Neil Peart, *Test for Echo* radio premiere broadcast, 5 September 1996.

elements further enhance the artificiality, as does Lifeson's chromatic opening riff, which also underlies the verses and parts of the bridges. The chorus shifts into a more "power pop" style and an unambiguous E minor. Earlier Rush songs, such as "2112" (2112, from 1976) and "Superconductor" (*Presto*, 1989), suggest that the band probably means such tonal, textural, and genre "clarifications" ironically.<sup>78</sup>

The ninth song, "Resist," suggests a waltz, through its near-pervasive use of triple metre. Musically, the song suggests an origin in a folk-like, voice-with-acoustic-guitar, context. A diatonic piano melody and Lee's prominent vocal harmonies (often modal-sounding, in fourths instead of sixths or thirds) add to the song's folk-like character. Lee sometimes sings rhythmically, emotionally, and wordlessly on the syllable "la." Susan Fast discusses Robert Plant's use of *a cappella* "la" sections in Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog" (*Led Zeppelin IV*, 1971) and "The Ocean" (*Houses of the Holy*, 1973) as textural/rhythmic pauses within songs otherwise based on highly complex hard rock riffs.<sup>79</sup> Although Rush derived much of its 1971-75 inspiration from Led Zeppelin, Lee's wordless sections in "Resist" function as natural extensions of the song's existing folk-like, emotional tone and, particularly, its waltz-like triple metre.

The lyrics of "Resist" address temptation and compromise in the context of moderate individualism and agnosticism, such as:

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<sup>78</sup> Just before the release of *Test for Echo* (1996), Peart complained about the Internet in a "Note from Neil" in *Modern Drummer* (August 1996). For about fifteen years, Peart responded by postcard or brief response to thousands of letters forwarded to him by the magazine. However, the ease of communication facilitated by the Internet (he called it the "World-Wide GossipNet" and the "Inter-thingy") meant that he could no longer continue with his "little secret." See <http://www.r-u-s-h.com/nmsmirror.com/HTML/articles/md0896.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Susan Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123.

**“Resist” Chorus 1 (0:23-50):**

I can learn to resist anything but temptation.  
I can learn to co-exist with anything but pain.  
I can learn to compromise anything but my desires.  
I can learn to get along with all the things I can't explain.

The song's middle section provides a contrasting, even less rock-like, texture in 4/4. It features Lee's solo voice (i.e., without any harmony) and Lifeson's sparsely strummed acoustic guitar, with Peart joining in with subtle crescendos on a cymbal. Rush embraced the folk-like essence of “Resist” during the band's 2002 concert tour. Lee and Lifeson performed the song in an “unplugged” style on stools near the front of the stage. Both played acoustic guitars, but only Lee sang. The incorporation of such a one-song “mini acoustic set” served to demonstrate something of the kinder, gentler, emotional side of Rush that the band often buried in its elaborate musicianship. Wholly related to this, the live performances of “Resist” also provided Neil Peart with a brief respite after his elaborate, highly virtuosic jazz-rock drum solo. Susan Fast discusses a similar aspect to Led Zeppelin's live performances in the 1970s. The earlier band's acoustic set derived mainly from an interest in maintaining the “vibe” of how it originally recorded certain songs—all four band members in a semicircle.<sup>80</sup> Rush's acoustic version of “Resist” combined the song's *compositional* origins with a partial rest for Lee and Lifeson and a real rest for Peart.<sup>81</sup>

“Limbo” (tenth), an instrumental, allowed the band to indulge in non-seriousness for a few additional moments near the end of the album. The song's title implies Rush Limbaugh, although the song has nothing to do with the U.S. populist conservative. This represents the first time that Rush itself incorporated a near-pun on the band's name.

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<sup>80</sup> Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy*, 79-83.

<sup>81</sup> Rush played “Resist” in a normal rock style during its 1996-97 tour.

They resisted calling the song “Rush Limbo,” but the CD artwork for the lyrics of “Dog Years” shows a dog with a tag bearing that name. Perhaps inspired by “Resist,” this, the band’s fifth studio instrumental, occasionally includes wordless vocals (i.e., “ah”). In a humorous vein, it also includes several samples from Bobby “Boris” Pickett’s early-1960s Halloween dance novelty classic “The Monster Mash.” (The original song capitalized on the Mashed Potato, an early-1960s’ dance fad.) In “Limbo,” Rush avoids Bobby Pickett’s imitation of the classic horror film actor Boris Karloff in favour of occasional samples from the song’s gurgling laboratory sounds, Dracula’s complaint “Whatever happened to my Transylvania Twist” and Igor’s enthusiastic “mmm . . . mash good! . . . mmm.”

The title of “Carve Away the Stone,” the closing (eleventh) song, on the surface seems to suggest something along the lines of the Inuit stone-carving photograph shown in the CD’s liner notes. However, it actually presents a version of the Sisyphus myth:

**“Carve Away the Stone” Verse 1 (0:07-23):**

You can roll that stone to the top of the hill,  
Drag your ball and chain behind you.  
You can carry that weight with an iron will,  
Or let the pain remain behind you.

**Chorus 1 (0:33-56):**

Chip away the stone[, Sisyphus.] Chip away the stone.  
Make the burden lighter, if you must roll that rock alone.

Verse 2 approaches the punishment meted out to Sisyphus from a more modern viewpoint: unsuccessfully trying to escape from the psychological weight of acts committed. Chorus 2 “ups the ante” from merely chipping the stone to carving something of oneself into it. After a guitar solo, Verse 3 combines aspects of the first two verses. Chorus 3 then tells Sisyphus, or his modern equivalent, to roll the stone away completely—the narrator wants room to get working on his *own* stone.

Musically, the song frequently varies from among a number of different time signatures (4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 7/4) and tonal implications (D, E, F, G). The opening/verse chord progression—G Asus2 E | G Asus2 D—introduces a cross-relation (G/G $\sharp$ ) that anticipates the eventual E major (tone higher) of Verse 3. That verse also includes the cross-relation, now up a tone: A/A $\sharp$ , but the following pre-chorus/chorus drops immediately back to non-E areas. On the other hand, the song’s final repeated instrumental section (with its various extended chords) precludes any ultimate tonal stability. Even the final chord, D sus, simultaneously suggests D and G. These elements parallel the uneven (asymmetrical) distribution of energies suggested in the lyrics. Rolling a large stone up a hill or dealing with psychological issues (“weight”) takes considerable time and effort, and then the cycle might very well begin again immediately.<sup>82</sup> However, Rush’s well-entrenched album/touring cycle did not (see Figure 5.1 for a 1996-97 tour photo).

**Figure 5.1: Rush in Concert, 1996-97**

Note the spacious stage-setup and the elegant/transparent use of technology.  
(See the Rush WebRing: <http://s.webring.com/hub?sid=&ring=rushring&id=&hub>)



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<sup>82</sup> The verse-phrase closing chords of this concluding song (E vs. D) reflect the tonal areas of about half of the songs on the album.



### ***Vapor Trails, 2002***

Between July 4, 1997 (the end of the *Test for Echo* tour) and September 11, 2000, a great deal changed for Rush, especially for Neil Peart. His only child, Selena, died in a single-car accident on August 10, 1997 (several weeks before she would have started university) and his spouse, Jacqueline Taylor, died of cancer in June of 1998. Peart retired from music-making, lived for extended periods in England and Barbados (with his wife before she died), and then traveled 55, 000 miles by motorcycle throughout Canada, the U.S., Mexico, and Belize. He wrote hundreds of letters (especially to his recently imprisoned pot-smuggling best friend), read numerous fiction and non-fiction books, wrote part of one book and most of another (the latter published in 2002). He also convinced himself to start dating (after over twenty years), started playing the drums again, met his future second wife (California native Carrie Nuttall) in Los Angeles, got married near Santa Barbara, and moved to his wife's adopted home of Santa Monica. In January of 2001 Rush began to write and record its seventeenth studio album.<sup>83</sup> On March 29, 2002 the band released its first new song in five and a half years, "One Little Victory." The thirteen-song album *Vapor Trails* followed on May 14.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> In 2001, Rush's former record label, Mercury, also released a DVD update of its Rush music video collection, *Chronicles* (1991). Like its VHS predecessor, it covers material from 1977-87.

<sup>84</sup> Hugh Syme's cover for Rush's fourth live album, *Different Stages* (1998), shows three differently coloured components of a child's tinker toy. The separate components presumably refer to the individual band members, and the toy itself refers to the band. The inner packaging refers to the combination of mid-1990s and late-1970s recordings by placing humorous 1990s images of Lee and Lifeson (along with fictitious 1998 concert posters) into a photo otherwise apparently taken outside London's Hammersmith Odeon just before a 1978 Rush show. Unusually, the CD package uses a format entirely made of paper, and one disc also includes software for a computer-based graphics arts program called "Clusterworks," by Japanese artist and Rush fan Hisashi Hoda. (Rush enjoyed a substantial following in Japan.) The album booklet includes a photo collage of numerous Rush items from between the early 1970s and 1997, thus substantially expanding on the concert photographs provided in the packaging materials of the band's three earlier live albums.

Lee's solo album, *My Favourite Headache* (2000), features a similarly elaborate paper-based design.

### “One Little Victory” (*Vapor Trails*, 2002)

In “One Little Victory,” the opening song of *Vapor Trails*, Alex Lifeson contributes heavy electric guitar riffs (though often layered with “heavy acoustics”), the rhythmic motion of which also recalls his funk/groove experiments in music from between 1989 and 1993. The song tonally centres on E, primarily minor-inflected but sometimes touching on Phrygian (or modified blues scale), pentatonic, mixolydian, and major, thus making the precise number of “tonal areas” difficult to pinpoint. This recalls Rush’s modally mixed approach of the early 1980s, in which the band harmonically bridged the areas that it also bridged stylistically: blues-rock, hard rock, heavy metal, progressive rock, and post-punk. The inclusion of heavy acoustic guitars recalls the Who, one “classic rock” band that all three members of Rush cited as an early influence. (Neil Peart played in a Who cover band around 1973-74.)

As in many Rush songs, Geddy Lee plays an athletically leaping bass part in certain sections of “One Little Victory.” In addition, he often sings higher than on most of the band’s several dozen studio tracks from the 1990s. This suggests a

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Like *Different Stages* (all four Rush live albums, in fact), Lee’s solo album does not provide any printed lyrics. Lee’s eleven songs, however (musically co-written with Ben Mink and most featuring alternative rock drummer Matt Cameron), first appeared on this album. Thus, the album indicates the website that contains its lyrics: <http://myfavoriteheadache.com>.

Syme’s cover for *Vapor Trails* (2002) depicts a stylized, painted comet. The comet’s body seems to contain shadows and distorted faces, perhaps phantoms. The song “Vapor Trail,” an analogy for fading memories, inspired not only the album title but also these images. The grammatically plural version suggests that each of the album’s thirteen songs serves as a vapor trail. In the artwork, the comet’s trail (tail?) carries over on the rear artwork of the CD booklet. When one fully opens the booklet, the comet appears with an extended trail across the front and back cover. When one sets the booklet in place in the CD packaging (and the disc itself is absent), the trail connects to a similar one on the disc inlay. Inside the CD booklet and on the album website (<http://rushvaportrails.com>), Syme pairs the lyrics for each of the thirteen songs with a drawing of a suitable Tarot card. The song “Peaceable Kingdom” refers to Tarot cards. Some of the song-card associations fit better than others, but the overall effect gives a sense of rationalism challenged by uncontrollable forces. Although otherwise a “rational-scientific-sceptic,” Peart’s interest in Tarot cards dates to a reading he had in Venice Beach, CA while on a date in May 1999. See Neil Peart, *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), 338.

Rush recorded *Vapor Trails* in Toronto, co-producing it with former engineer Paul Northfield.

coming to terms with the fact that many people, especially casual fans, expect him to sing this way. On the other hand, Lee sings in his natural chest voice for certain parts of the song, especially the first half of each verse, and he also experiments with changing the way he *uses* his countertenor and falsetto singing styles. In this and several other songs on *Vapor Trails*, Lee sometimes “flips” into falsetto by leap and by incorporating a slight timbral shift, more like in rhythm-and-blues, pop, or grunge. “One Little Victory” also features numerous vocal overdubs, along with subtle octave multi-tracking. These produce an almost “baroque” effect and also reflect some of the textures achieved on Lee’s solo album *My Favourite Headache* (2000). Such experiments expanded the less pervasive use of vocal overdubs that Lee applied to the band’s studio albums from the mid-1980s to *Test for Echo* (1996). Throughout *Vapor Trails*, Lee’s extensive vocal textures function as organic replacements for the synthesizer/sampler sounds he applied to much the band’s music between 1982 and 1987 and to a lesser extent between 1989 and 1996.<sup>85</sup> In this and other ways, *Vapor Trails* demonstrates a long gestation period:

1. Lee and Lifeson’s initial instrumental jamming and Peart’s initial lyric-writing activities, starting in January of 2001
2. an overlapping process of writing, arranging, and recording during most of the rest of 2001 (largely in Toronto, with Peart flying in from California)
3. a lengthy mixing period, mainly by David Leonard, from December 2001 to February 2002
4. the pre-release of “One Little Victory” on radio and internet on 29 March 2002
5. activities surrounding the release of *Vapor Trails* on 14 May 2002

This represents a much longer period than previous Rush albums, which averaged about 8-10 weeks of writing/arranging/rehearsing and 8-10 weeks of recording, with some

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<sup>85</sup> As with certain 1980s Rush songs that proved difficult to play live (because of the amount of synthesizers and samplers used on the recordings), Lee suggests that “Stars Look Down” (2002) may feature too many vocal overdubs to play the song live. See <http://www.getmusic.com/alist/rush/.html>. To my knowledge, the band did not perform that song live during its 2002 tour.

albums (e.g., *Roll the Bones*, 1991) taking much less time to create.

During “One Little Victory,” Neil Peart often plays an underlying, “snappy,” beat-anticipating drum pattern, yet the texture and density vary a number of times throughout. The song features numerous rhythmic complexities but almost none of the band’s earlier predilection for asymmetrical time signatures (7/8, 5/4, etc.). The song invokes something like heavy metal “head-banging,” but in a very peculiar Rush idiom. Indeed, one of the song’s rhythms clearly evokes the short-long-short-long “swagger” rhythm of the band’s 1981 song “Tom Sawyer.” Peart’s lyrics perfectly encapsulate Rush’s moderate individualism of the 1980s and beyond, and the band thus also chose to open the album with this song.<sup>86</sup> Musically and lyrically, “One Little Victory” demonstrates the reasons for many rock critics never having come to terms with Rush. However, the reasons for Rush’s influence on Primus and on other 1990s, alternative, progressive metal, and post-progressive bands (“musicians’ musicians”) certainly also hold for this song.

In a similar vein, the album’s final song, “Out of the Cradle,” ends with sung repetitions of the words “endlessly rocking.” The members of Rush may not have intended this as humorous, but it nonetheless evokes the band’s ongoing paradoxical status somewhere between “classic rock” and “contemporary rock.” To complicate this even further, another song recalls “classic” Rush even more “One Little Victory.” “Freeze, Part IV of Fear” with its complicated/shifting time signatures, provides an unexpected continuation of Neil Peart’s 1981-84 “Fear Trilogy”—“Witch Hunt,” “The Weapon,” and “The Enemy Within.”

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<sup>86</sup> In March/April of 2002, <http://rush.com> played “One Little Victory” continuously for several weeks, and rock radio stations added the song to their playlists more often than any other song.

## **Additional Trails**

Some of the thirteen songs on *Vapor Trails* (2002) suggest influences from 1990s Brit-Pop and, to a lesser extent, from 1960s folk rock. This includes an emphasis on stepwise tunefulness, jangly (though generally still heavy) guitars, Lee's close vocal harmonies (often in "modal" parallel 4ths or 5ths), and, in some songs, wordless vocalizing. For example, the band features such elements in "Ceiling Unlimited," "Ghost Rider," "How It Is," "Vapor Trail," "Sweet Miracle," and "Nocturne." The three songs discussed above, "One Little Victory," "Freeze," and "Out of the Cradle," fit more closely with Rush's post-1981 tempered individualism. They also fit with the band's continued interest in a somewhat what consistent and aggressive progressive/hard rock fusion. On the other hand, all three songs also feature some close vocal harmonies and wordless vocalizing. Positioned 1<sup>st</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> (i.e., last), these songs provide a frame for the unusually high percentage of personal songs on much of the rest of the album. Four of the album's most beautiful songs, "Peaceable Kingdom," "The Stars Look Down," "Secret Touch," and "Earthshine" (balancing the album at positions 4, 5, 8, and 9 of 13), lyrically and musically combine the two tendencies.

Some of Peart's lyrics on *Vapor Trails*, especially "Ghost Rider" but also aspects of "How It Is," "Ceiling Unlimited," "Secret Touch," and "Vapor Trail" at least partly refer to his personal tragedies of 1997-98 and/or his subsequent healing process. In addition, Peart indicates specific influences upon certain songs:

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” [“if culture is the curse of the thinking class”]. Joseph Conrad’s *Victory* gave the “secret touch on the heart” line. “There is never love without pain” [also in “Secret Touch”] 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.”<sup>87</sup>

Other songs, especially “Earthshine” and “Sweet Miracle” but perhaps also “Nocturne,” more strongly suggest Peart’s renewed lease on life. “Peaceable Kingdom,” with its burning tower tarot card imagery in the CD booklet, seems to refer to the ethos of post-September 11, 2001. Peart suggests influences on these as well:

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” [also in “Nocturne”].

The nineteenth-century Quaker folk artist, Edward Hicks, painted no [fewer] than sixty versions of the same biblical scene, “Peaceable Kingdom” [the title of one of the album’s songs, originally slated as the album’s instrumental], and the tarot card “The Tower” [associated with “Peaceable Kingdom” in the CD booklet] 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.<sup>88</sup>

Peart’s literary influences reflect his relatively serious take on the world. However, they also indicate his combination of influences from various 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century figures from the United States, Europe, and Canada and from a variety of non-fiction.

In his *Vapor Trails* “Album Bio,” Peart, author of several books and numerous articles, explains the renewed creative process:

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<sup>87</sup> See Neil Peart, “Album Bio,” <http://rushvaportrails.com>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

[s]ometimes 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. [Guitarist] Alex [Lifeson] was my personal producer and recording engineer, as he had been for this phase of many past albums.<sup>89</sup>

This “natural selection” means that Rush could fully determine the structure of most of its new music by the end of the refinement period of the compositional process.

Despite Rush’s lengthy sabbatical (mid-1997 to early 2001) and the comparatively long period of time to make the album *Vapor Trails* (2002), the band’s renewed compositional approach and touring schedule resembled its earlier activities. However, the band’s new music struck a more consistent emotional chord, probably due to Peart’s family tragedies of 1997-98 and his subsequent personal renewal—such as extensive travelling, reading, and writing in addition to re-marrying and resuming as a powerful drummer-lyricist. Lee’s strong vocal melodies (often incorporating countertenor), ornate vocal harmonies, elaborate bass playing, and avoidance of keyboards reflect a deepening of the band’s traditional lyrics/music “back and forth.” Lifeson’s prominent electric guitars, with extensive riffs, layering, solos, and “hard alternative” influences, also look forward while simultaneously looking back.

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<sup>89</sup> See <http://rushvaportrails.com>.

## Appendix A

### Rush Albums, *Billboard* Chart Peaks, and RIAA (U.S.) Certifications

1974-82: LPs, 8-tracks, and cassettes (Canada-U.S., partial/late issues in other countries)	
1974 <i>Rush</i> (#105)	gold 1995 (Moon, <sup>1</sup> Mercury/Anthem)
1975 <i>Fly by Night</i> (#113)	gold/platinum 1993
1975 <i>Careless of Steel</i> (#148)	gold 1993
1976 <i>2112</i> (#61)	gold 1977, plat. 1981, 2X '93, 3X '95
1976 <i>All the World's a Stage</i> (live 2-LP anthology, #40)	gold 1977, platinum 1981
1977 <i>A Farewell to Kings</i> (#33)	gold 1977, platinum 1993
1978 <i>Archives</i> (boxed reissue of the first three LPs)	gold/platinum 1995
1978 <i>Hemispheres</i> (#47)	gold 1978, platinum 1993
1980 <i>Permanent Waves</i> (#4)	gold 1980, platinum 1987
1981 <i>Moving Pictures</i> (#3)	gold/platinum 1981, 2X '84, 4X '95
<i>Moving Pictures</i> reissued on CD in 1983	
1981 <i>Exit . . . Stage Left</i> (live 2-LP anthology, #10)	gold 1982, platinum 1987 (plus video)
1982 <i>Signals</i> (#10)	gold/platinum 1982
<i>Signals</i> reissued on CD around 1983-84	
1984 <i>Grace under Pressure</i> (#10)	gold/platinum 1984
<i>Grace under Pressure</i> initially released on LP and cassette only	
1985-89: LPs, cassettes, and CDs	
1985 <i>Power Windows</i> (#10)	gold 1985, platinum 1986
1987 <i>Hold Your Fire</i> (#13)	gold 1987
1987: remaining 1974-84 albums (except <i>Archives</i> ) reissued on CD, the live albums exclude "What You're Doing" and "A Passage to Bangkok," respectively	
1989 <i>A Show of Hands</i> (live 1-CD anthology, #21)	gold 1989 (plus video)
1989 <i>Presto</i> (#16), mastered for CD	gold 1990 (Atlantic/Anthem <sup>2</sup> )
1990-96: CDs and cassettes	
1990 <i>Chronicles</i> (2-CD/2-cassette anthology, #51)	gold/plat. 1992, 2X-plat. 1995 (plus video)
(Mercury/Anthem), includes live "What You're Doing" and "A Passage to Bangkok"	
1991 <i>Roll the Bones</i> (#3)	gold 1991, platinum 2001
1993 <i>Counterparts</i> (#2)	gold 1993
1996 <i>Test for Echo</i> (#5)	gold 1996
1997-98: CDs only	
1997: all 1974-89 albums (except <i>Archives</i> and <i>Presto</i> ) remastered on CDs and cassettes the first two live albums reinstate "What You're Doing" and "A Passage to Bangkok" all original LP graphics and lyrics also reinstated	
1997 <i>Retrospective I 1974-1980</i> (Mercury/Anthem, 1-CD anthology of remastered recordings)	
1997 <i>Retrospective II 1981-1987</i> (Mercury/Anthem, 1-CD anthology of remastered recordings)	
1998 <i>Different Stages</i> (live 3-CD anthology, #35)	gold 1998
2002 <i>Vapor Trails</i> (#6)	
2003 <i>The Spirit of Radio: Greatest Hits 1974-1987</i> (Mercury/Anthem, 1-CD anthology)	
2003 <i>Rush in Rio</i> (live 3-CD anthology)	gold 2004 (plus video)
2004 <i>Feedback</i> (8-song "EP" CD of 1960s' cover songs)	

<sup>1</sup> The original Canadian releases were on Moon until 1976, then on Anthem starting in 1977. Canadian reissues were on Anthem or Mercury/Anthem. Non-Canadian releases were on Mercury.

<sup>2</sup> All releases from *Presto* on (except the anthologies) were on Atlantic/Anthem. See also Appendix K: "Album Track Listings and Cumulative Song Charts."



## Appendix B

### The Ten Primary Rush Cities, 1977-2002

incl. venues within 120 kilometres (75 miles) during the same tour; k=1, 000 seats<sup>3</sup>

- Toronto, ON Maple Leaf Gardens (16k):  
77-3, 78-3, 80-3, 81-2, 82-3, 84-2, 86-2, 88-2, 90-2, 96-1  
Molson Amphitheatre (16k): 97-2, 2002-1  
Air Canada Centre (20k): 2002-1
- Detroit, MI Joe Louis Arena (20k): 79-2, 82-2  
Palace Auburn Hills (20k): 90-2, 91-2, 94-2, 96-1  
Cobo Hall: 81-3  
Pine Knob Music Theater (15k): 97-1  
aka DTE Energy Music Theatre: 2002-2
- Philadelphia, PA Spectrum (17.5k): 79-2, 82-2, 86-2, 87-3, 90-2, 91-2, 94-2  
aka CoreStates Spectrum or CoreStates Center: 96-1  
Tweeter Center (7k): 2002-1  
First Union Center (20k): 2002-1
- Los Angeles, CA (incl. Anaheim, Long Beach, Irvine)  
Forum (17k):  
80-3, 81-2, 83-2, 84-2, 86-2, 88-2, 90-2, 92-2, 94-1, 96-2  
Staples Center (19k): 2002-1  
Anaheim—Convention Center: 81-1  
Anaheim—Arrowhead Pond (17k): 94-1  
Long Beach—Arena: 80-1, 81-1, 83-2  
Irvine—Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre (15k): 84-1, 92-2  
aka Verizon Wireless Amphitheater: 2002-1
- San Francisco, CA (incl. Oakland, San Jose, Mountain View)  
Cow Palace (12k): 80-2, 84-2, 86-1, 94-1  
Oakland—Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum (48k):  
81-2, 86-1, 90-2, 92-2  
San Jose—San Jose Arena (6.5k): 94-1, 96-1  
Mountain View—Shoreline Amphitheater (25k), 2002-1
- St. Louis, MO Checkerdome (17k): 81-2, 82-2  
Kiel Auditorium: 80-2  
St. Louis Arena (19k): 88-2, 91-1 aka Kiel Center: 96-1  
Riverport Amphitheater: 92-1, 97-1  
aka UMB Bank Pavilion: 2002-1

[continued]

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ballparks.com/index.html> and <http://www.azhockey.com> for information (including seating capacities) concerning venues also used for professional sports.

- Dallas, TX (incl. Fort Worth)
  - Reunion Arena (18k): 81-1, 83-2, 86-2, 88-2, 96-1
  - Starplex Amphitheater (20k): 97-1
    - aka Smirnoff Music Centre: 2002-1
  - Forth Worth—Tarrant County Convention Center: 80-2, 81-1
  
- New York, NY (incl. New Jersey and Long Island)
  - Madison Square Garden (19k):
    - 81-1, 82-2, 84-1, 87-1, 91-2, 94-2, 2002-1
  - Radio City Music Hall: sold-out series of five shows, 83-5
  - New Jersey—Brendan Byrne Arena (20k): 81-2, 84-1
    - aka Meadowlands: 86-2, 87-1, 90-2, 92-1, 94-1
    - aka Continental Arena: 96-1
  - New Jersey—Blockbuster-Sony Entertainment Center (25k): 97-1
  - New Jersey (Holmdel)—PNC Bank Arts Center (17.5): 2002-1
  - Uniondale, NY—Nassau Coliseum (17k):
    - 81-1, 82-2, 84-1, 86-2, 87-1, 90-1, 92-1, 94-1, 96-1
  - Wantagh, NY—Jones Beach Amphitheater (15k): 2002-1
  
- Boston, MA (incl. Worcester and Mansfield, MA; Providence, RI)
  - Boston Garden (14.5k): 81-1, 82-1
  - Fleet Center (17.5k): 96-1, 2002-1
  - Worcester—Centrum (12.5k): 82-1, 85-2, 87-2, 90-2, 94-2
  - Mansfield—Great Woods Amphitheatre (20k): 97-1
    - aka Tweeter Center: 2002-1
  - Providence—Civic Center (12k): 81-1, 84-2, 87-2
  
- Chicago, IL (incl. Rockford, IL; Milwaukee, WI)
  - Rosemont Horizon (18.5): 82-3, 84-2, 86-2, 88-2, 91-1, 94-2
  - (New) World (Music) Theater/Center/Amphitheater (28.5k): 92-1, 97-1
    - aka Tweeter Center: 2002-1
  - United Center (21k): 96-1, 2002-1
  - Rockford—MetroCentre (10k): 96-1
  - Milwaukee—Mecca Arena (15k): 82-1, 84-1, 86-1, 88-1
  - Milwaukee—Bradley Center, (19k): 91-1, 94-1, 96-1
  - Milwaukee—Marcus Amphitheater (24k): 97-1

## Appendix C

### Thirty Representative Secondary Rush Cities, 1977-2002

showing only multiple-show tours (single shows during numerous additional tours), including venues within 120 kilometres (75 miles) during the same tour; k=1, 000 seats

- Buffalo, NY: Memorial Auditorium, 77-2
- Portland, OR: Coliseum, 77-3
- Columbus, OH: Ohio Center, 78-2, 79-2
- Montreal, PQ: Forum (18k), 78-2, 80-2, 83-2, 84-2, 96-1  
Molson Centre (21k), 97-1
- Pittsburgh: Civic Arena, 79-2
- Atlanta: Omni, 80-2
- Seattle, WA: Center Coliseum, 80-2, 81-2)
- Bloomington, MN: Met Center, 81-2, 84-2
- Largo, MD: Capital Center, 81-2
- Hartford, CT: Civic Center, 81-2, 84-1
- New Haven, CT: Coliseum, 84-1
- Kansas City, MO: Kemper Arena, 81-2
- Cleveland, OH:  
Richfield Coliseum, 81-2, 84-2, 91-2
- London, U.K.: Wembley Arena (11.5k), 81-3, 83-4, 88-3, 92-2
- Dayton, OH: U. of Dayton Aud., 82-2)
- Birmingham, U.K.: National Exhibition Centre, 83-2, 88-2, 92-2
- Edinburgh, U.K.: Royal Highlands Arts Exhibition Centre, 83-2
- Honolulu, HI: NBC Arena, 84-2
- Richmond, VA:  
Coliseum, 85-1, 86-1, 92-1
- Hampton, VA: Coliseum, 92-1
- Costa Mesa, CA:  
Pacific Amphitheatre, 86-2
- Houston, TX: Summit Ar., 86-2, 96-1  
Woodlands Pavilion, 97-1
- St. John's, NF:  
Lord Beaverbrook Rink, 87-2
- Little Rock, AR: Barton Col., 88-2
- Memphis, TN: Mid-South Col., 88-2
- Jacksonville, FL:  
Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 90-2
- Cincinnati, OH: Riverfront Col., 90-1  
Riverbend Music Center, 90-1
- San Diego, CA: Sports Arena, 96-1  
GTE Amphitheater, 97-1
- Ottawa, ON: Civic Arena, 96-1  
Corel Centre, 97-1
- Phoenix, AZ:  
America West Arena, 96-1  
Desert Sky Pavilion, 97-1

## Appendix D

### "Each Another's Audience:" a Rush Fan Survey, November 2000<sup>4</sup> (very similar to the summer 2001 survey; shorter than the 1996 survey)

1. How many Rush concerts have you been to?
2. About how many Rush albums do you have?
3. Around when (what year) did you start listening to Rush's music?
4. Circle the major factors in why you like Rush's music (and/or write your own).

Geddy's vocals	Neil's drumming
Geddy's bass-playing	Neil's lyrics
Geddy's keyboard playing	song structures
Alex's riffs	rhythms
Alex's solos	melodies
other:	
5. If possible, what is your favourite Rush **album**?
6. If possible, what is your **least** favourite Rush album?
7. If possible, what is your favourite Rush **song**?
8. If possible, what is your **least** favourite Rush song?
9. Which of the following five phrases best describes Rush's music? Circle your #1 answer.

hard rock	progressive rock	power trio
heavy metal	conceptual rock	
10. If you could pick a second description, which one would it be? Circle your #2 answer.

hard rock	progressive rock	power trio
heavy metal	conceptual rock	
11. What is your favourite radio station?
12. What is that station's format (classic rock, modern rock, sports, news, talk, etc.)?
13. What are your 3 favourite bands/artists? (Include Rush, if appropriate.)

[continued]

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<sup>4</sup> See also Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 16-19, 183.

14. Do you (or did you) like any of the following artists?  
Circle only the ones you like(d).

King's X  
Led Zeppelin  
Yes  
E.L.P.  
Genesis  
Jethro Tull  
KISS  
Pink Floyd  
R.E.M.  
Soundgarden

King Crimson  
Metallica  
Boston  
Dream Theater  
Aerosmith  
Van Halen  
Styx  
Steve Vai  
Tori Amos  
AC/DC

15. About how many records/tapes/CDs/mp3 albums do you have in total?

16. How old are you?

17. Are you a) male or b) female?

18. What is your highest level of education? Circle the one that is most correct.

some high school  
vocational school  
some undergrad  
some grad school  
doctorate

high school  
community college  
bachelor's  
master's

19. If applicable, what do you (or did you) major in?

20. If you are not in school, what is your employment?

21. If any, what instrument(s) do you play? And/or do you sing?

22. Have you ever written a song?

23. Where did you grow up (city, state/province, and/or country)?

24. Which ethnicity best describes you (white, black, Asian, Hispanic, other)?

Thanks!

## Appendix E

### Summary of Rush Fan Survey Responses (161 respondents)

	1996 (L.A.)	2000 (Ontario)	2001 (Toronto)
	<b>Concerts</b>	<b>Lee autographs</b>	<b>Convention</b>
male	78%	87%	71%
female	22%	13%	29% <sup>5</sup>
age range	16-39	17-48	12-50 <sup>6</sup>
average age	27.7	30.6	29.8
20s/30s	97%	90%	85%
average initiation age	13.7	12.6	14.2
11-16 initiation range	69%	51%	62%
17-44 initiation age	21%	19%	22%
0-10 initiation range	10%	30%	16%
musicians <sup>7</sup>	70%	67%	71%
college-educated <sup>8</sup>	90%	80%	73%
white	N/A	90.5%	90.5%
non-white or “bi-racial”	N/A	9.5%	9.5%

NOTE: Because of the Rush concert (Los Angeles Forum, September 1996), Geddy Lee autograph signing (St. Catharines, Ontario, 2000), and Rush Convention (Toronto, Ontario, 2001) contexts for these surveys—and because of the fairly involved process of answering all of the questions—the vast majority of these respondents would certainly fall into the category of “hardcore” fans.

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<sup>5</sup> One of the female fans was a North American native person who grew up in New Jersey and in the Canadian province of Newfoundland. She also sings lead vocals in a Rush cover band.

<sup>6</sup> The 50-year-old fan was a woman (from Illinois) who started listening to Rush around 1995. One of the two 45-year-old fans (from the Toronto area) had been listening to the band for 33 years. He made it a point to indicate that he had followed Rush since its teenaged, amateur performances in Toronto-area junior high schools in 1968.

<sup>7</sup> I include singers, lyricists, and songwriters in this category.

<sup>8</sup> I include diplomas from community colleges/vocational schools as well as incomplete degrees.

**Appendix F**  
**Rush Fan Surveys—Initiate Group Listening Contexts**  
(sorted by 1974-79 data)

**Do you (or did you) like any of the following artists?**

Initiate group:	1974-79		1980-83		1984-2000	
	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000
Survey %s:	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000
Yes	100	79*	46	62*	57	56*
Led Zeppelin	100	75*	77	69*	79	61*
Genesis	92	67*	46	44*	57	61*
Pink Floyd	85	79*	69	81*	79	50
Boston	85	75*	62	31	57	44*
Van Halen	85	71*	69	62*	71	44
Aerosmith	69	50*	38	31*	57	56*
E.L.P.	69	21	15	6	7	11
Jethro Tull	62	62*	38	44*	7	22
Metallica	62	54*	77	62*	71	72*
Styx	62	54*	54	31	43	44*
AC/DC	54	62*	38	50*	57	50*
Soundgarden	46	42*	69	44	50	50*
Dream Theater	46	8	15	19*	14	39
KISS	38	58	15	38	21	50
Steve Vai	38	29*	15	31	14	33
R.E.M.	31	33*	31	19	57	22
King's X	31	12	31	6	21	17*
Tori Amos	23	8	23	12	43	11
King Crimson	15	29	8	6*	14	6

\* indicates that the results from the two survey samples  
vary by no more than 30%

I combined two groups from 1974 to 1979 and several groups from 1984 to 2000 (1984-96 in the earlier survey) to match the larger sample of fans who started listening to Rush's music in the period from 1980 to 1983. This makes the three initiate groups roughly the same proportion of the combined samples: 38%, 29.5%, and 32.5%.

## Appendix G

### Rush Fan Surveys—the Twelve Leading Top 3 Artists

	1996	2000
Rush (Canadian, progressive hard rock and eclectic rock)	85.0%	93.0%
Pink Floyd (British, progressive and psychedelic progressive rock)	20.0	8.5
Led Zeppelin (British, eclectic rock and proto-heavy metal)	18.0	15.0
Yes (British, progressive rock and progressive-influenced pop-rock)	12.0	8.5
the Beatles (British, eclectic rock 'n' roll, pop, and rock)	7.5	3.5
Van Halen (U.S., heavy metal, hard rock, and stadium rock)	7.5	3.5
the Dave Matthews Band (international, eclectic rock and hard rock)	7.5	1.5
Oingo Boingo (U.S., post-punk, new wave, and pop-rock)	7.5	1.5
Black Sabbath (British, eclectic proto-heavy metal and heavy metal)	5.0	8.5
the Tragically Hip (Canadian, blues- and r&b-influenced hard rock)	2.5	12.0
Metallica (U.S., heavy metal, speed metal, and hard rock)	2.5	12.0
Genesis (British, progressive rock and progressive-influenced pop-rock)	0.0	10.0



## **Appendix H**

### **Professional Musicians Interested in Rush's music, ca 1983-2002**

#### **Classical string players**

- Rachel Barton, violin
- Edgar Gabriel, violin
- Brandon Vamos, cello
- Todd Rubenstein, cello/bass
- Paul Tobias, violin/viola
- Patricia Tobias, violin/viola
- Andre Janovich, cello
- Barry Sines, violin
- Dan Furmanik, violin
- Thomas Sauders, bass

#### **Rock/alternative musicians**

- Beck
- Kim Deal  
(the Pixies, the Breeders)
- Billy Joel
- Nick Lowe
- Randy Newman
- Sinead O'Connor
- Steve Morse, guitar
- James Murphy, guitar, etc.
- Deen Castronovo, drums
- Stuart Hamm, bass
- DJ Z-Trip

#### **Jazz musician**

- David Restivo, piano

#### **Members of rock bands**

- 311
- the Barenaked Ladies
- Blood Coven
- Blue Öyster Cult
- Capital 2
- Catherine Wheel
- Cherry Popping Daddies
- Deadsy
- Diamond Head
- Disarray
- Dokken
- Dream Theater
- Engrave Speed Death
- Faith No More
- Fates Warning
- Fishbone
- FM
- Foghat
- Godsmack
- Great White
- Hate Theory
- Hostile Intent
- Jane's Addiction
- Killingfield
- King's X
- KISS
- Korn
- Lemur Voice
- Living Colour
- Max Webster
- Marilyn Manson
- Megadeth
- Meshuggah
- Metallica
- Midnight Oil
- Mr. Big
- Mythiasin
- Nine Inch Nails
- Pantera
- Pavement
- Premonition
- Primus
- Prototype
- Queensryche
- the Red Hot Chili Peppers
- the Rheostatics
- Scary German Guy
- Shadow Gallery
- Shallows of the Mundane
- Silverchair
- Skid Row
- Slaughter
- Smashing Pumpkins
- Soundgarden
- Stone Temple Pilots
- Symphony X
- the Tragically Hip
- U2
- Utopia

## Appendix J: Neil Peart's Reading Lists

### Classic Literature

up to early-20<sup>th</sup> century, chronologically:

- mythology, especially ancient Greek
- the Bible (especially the King James Version)
- early Anglo-Saxon tales (e.g., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*)
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Kubla Khan*)
- Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield*)
- Gustave Flaubert
- Walt Whitman ("I Sing the Body Electric")
- Mark Twain
- Thomas Hardy
- Jerome K. Jerome (*Three Men and a Boat*)

### 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction

alphabetically by surname:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Edward Abbey ( <i>Black Sun</i> )  | Frank Herbert  |
| Chinua Achebe ( <i>Things Fall Apart</i> )   | Jack Kerouac ( <i>On the Road</i> )  |
| Isaac Asimov   | C. S. Lewis (possibly also non-fiction)  |
| W. H. Auden  | Sinclair Lewis ( <i>Main Street</i> )  |
| John Barth   | Jack London  |
| Saul Bellow ( <i>Henderson the Rain King</i> ,<br><i>Herzog</i> , <i>The Adventures of Augie March</i> ) | ( <i>The Sea Wolf</i> , <i>Son of the Wolf</i> )                                       |
| Max Braithwaite  | Gabriel Garcia Marquez   |
| Truman Capote ( <i>In Cold Blood</i> )   | Michael Moorcock   |
| Joseph Conrad ( <i>Victory</i> )   | Tim O'Brien ( <i>Tomcat in Love</i> )  |
| Lesley Choyce ( <i>World Enough</i> )  | Michael Ondaatje   |
| Margaret Craven  | Ayn Rand ( <i>Anthem</i> , <i>The Fountainhead</i> ,<br>probably also non-fiction)     |
| ( <i>I Heard the Owl Call My Name</i> )  | Tom Robbins ( <i>Jitterbug Perfume</i> )   |
| Samuel R. Delaney  | Dylan Thomas   |
| John Dos Passos  | Hunter S. Thompson ( <i>Hell's Angels</i> ,<br><i>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</i> ) |
| James David Duncan   | J. R. R. Tolkien ( <i>Lord of the Rings</i> )  |
| ( <i>The River Why</i> , <i>The Brothers K</i> )   | B. Traven  |
| George Eliot ( <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> )  | ( <i>The Treasure of the Sierra Madre</i> )  |
| William Faulkner   | Patrick White ( <i>The Twyborn Affair</i> )  |
| F. Scott Fitzgerald  | Oscar Wilde  |
| Nadine Gordimer ( <i>The Conservationist</i> )   | Thomas Wolfe   |
| Graham Greene ( <i>The Lawless Roads</i> )   |  |
| David Guterson (short stories)   |  |
| Ernest Hemingway   | [additional lists below]   |

## **Non-fiction**

including “literary travel books,” alphabetically by surname:

- Jonny Bealby (*Running with the Moon*)
- Tim Cahill (*Road Fever*)
- Wayne W. Dyer (*Your Erroneous Zones*)
- Ian Frazier (*Great Plains*)
- Sigmund Freud
- Stephen Jay Gould (*Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*)
- Douglas How (*Night of the Caribou*)
- Carl Jung
- Aldo Leopold (*Sand County Almanac*)
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Camille Paglia
- Melissa Holbrook Pierson (*The Perfect Vehicle: “What Is It About Motorcycles?”*)
- Robert M. Pirsig (*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*)
- Clement Salvadori (*Motorcycle Journeys Through California*)
- Alex Shoumatoff (*African Madness, Legends of the American Desert*)
- Adam Smith (*Powers of Mind*)
- Wallace Stegner (*Wolf Willow, Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*)
- John Steinbeck (*Travels With Charley: In Search of America*)
- Vincent Van Gogh (*Dear Theo*)

## **Other reading, movies, non-rock music:**

- art and art books (e.g., works by Edward Hicks, M. C. Escher, Paterson Ewen)
- bird books (such as *Birds of Mexico*)
- black hole article (*Time* magazine, ca 1976)
- car, bicycling, and motorcycling books
- Keith Moon biography (drummer of the Who)
- self-help books (including grief books)
- *Blazing Saddles* (movie by Mel Brooks)
- *Eraserhead* (movie by David Lynch)
- *The Jazz Singer* (1927 movie)
- *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* (operas by Puccini)
- Frank Sinatra (e.g., 1940s/50s pop songs)

## Appendix K: Album Track Listings, with Selected Song Charts

1. *Rush* (1974, wr. 1971-73, rec. 1973, Eastern Sound and Toronto Sound; prod. Rush)
1. “Finding My Way” (5:05, words and music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson)
  2. “Need Some Love” (2:19, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
  3. “Take a Friend” (4:24, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
  4. “Here Again” (7:34, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
  5. “What You’re Doing” (4:22, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
  6. “In the Mood” (3:33, words and music by Lee)
  7. “Before and After” (5:34, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
  8. “Working Man” (7:10, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 24% E1-D2/E2-D3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 76% unison 10% contrapuntal 26%	<b>“Working Man”</b> 1974 – 8/8 – 7:10
<b>Bass</b> 89% solo 1%	<b>Guitar</b> 99% solo 33%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 0% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 92% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

2. *Fly By Night* (1975, wr. 1974-75, rec. Toronto Sound, prod. Rush/Terry Brown)

1. “Anthem” (4:21, words and music by Lee, Lifeson, and Neil Peart)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 40% E2-B2-F#3/G#3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 60% unison 20% contrapuntal 16%	<b>“Anthem”</b> 1975i – 1/8 – 4:21
<b>Bass</b> 98% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 100% solo 17%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 13%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 0% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 98% solo 3% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

2. “Best I Can” (3:25, words and music by Lee)
3. “Beneath, Between & Behind” (3:01, words and music by Lifeson/Peart)
4. “By-Tor & the Snow Dog” (8:37, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
5. “Fly by Night” (3:21, words and music by Lee/Peart)
6. “Making Memories” (2:57, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
7. “Rivendell” (4:57, words and music by Lee/Peart)
8. “In the End” (6:46, words and music by Lee/Lifeson)

3. *Caress of Steel* (1975, recorded at Toronto Sound, produced by Rush/T. Brown)

1. “Bastille Day” (4:37, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 31% D2-A2-E3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 69% unison 19% contrapuntal 7%	<b>“Bastille Day”</b> 1975ii – 1/5 – 4:37
<b>Bass</b> 86% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 99% solo 19%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 0% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 86% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

2. “I Think I’m Going Bald” (3:38, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
3. “Lakeside Park” (4:07, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
4. “The Necromancer” (12:29, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
5. “The Fountain if Lamneth” (19:58, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)  
In the Valley [4:13], Didacts and Narpets [1:02], No One at the Bridge [4:18],  
Panacea [3:14], Bacchus Plateau [3:14], The Fountain [3:50]

4. **2112** (1976, recorded at Toronto Sound, produced by Rush and Terry Brown)

1. “2112” (20:33, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart)  
Overture [4:33], The Temples of Syrinx [2:12], Discovery [3:29],  
Presentation [3:42], Oracle: The Dream [2:00], Soliloquy [2:21], Grand Finale [2:14]

<b>Vocals</b> lead 36% E1-E2/G2-G3 backing 1% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 62% unison 17% contrapuntal 18%	<b>“2112”</b> 1976 – 1/6 – 20:33
<b>Bass</b> 68% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 95% solo 14%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 4%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 4% guest yes	<b>Perc.</b> 64% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 24%

2. “A Passage to Bangkok” (3:34, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart)
3. “The Twilight Zone” (3:17, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart)
4. “Lessons” (3:50, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Lifeson)
5. “Tears” (3:30, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Lee)
6. “Something for Nothing” (3:58, music by Lee/Peart, words by Peart)

5. **All the World’s a Stage** (1976, rec. Massey Hall, Toronto; prod. Rush/T. Brown)

1. “Bastille Day” (4:40,<sup>9</sup> words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
2. “Anthem” (4:33, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
3. “Fly by Night”/“In the Mood”  
(4:47 total, words and music by Lee/Peart and Lee, respectively)
4. “Something for Nothing” (3:48; music by Lee/Peart, words by Peart)
5. “Lakeside Park” (4:15, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
6. “2112” (15:44, partial, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart)
7. “By-Tor and The Snow Dog” (11:38; words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)
8. “In the End” (6:48; words and music by Lee/Lifeson)
9. “Working Man”/“Finding My Way” (13:22 total; words/music by Lee/Lifeson)
10. “What You’re Doing” (4:55; words and music by Lee/Lifeson)

6. **A Farewell to Kings**

(1977, written 1976-77, rec. Rockfield Studios, Wales; prod. Rush/Terry Brown)

1. “A Farewell to Kings” (5:49, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart)
2. “Xanadu” (11:05, music by Lee/Lifeson, words by Peart)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 25% B0-C2/C#2-D3 backing 0% guest: no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 75% unison 14% contrapuntal 5%	<b>“Xanadu”</b> 1977 – 2/6 – 11:05
<b>Bass</b> 68% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 97% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 17%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 46% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 95% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 29%

3. “Closer to the Heart” (2:52, music by Lee/Lifeson, words by Peart/Peter Talbot)
4. “Cinderella Man” (4:19, music by Lee/Lifeson, words by Lee)
5. “Madrigal” (2:33, music by Lee/Lifeson, words by Peart)
6. “Cygnus X-1: Book One—The Voyage”  
(10:21, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart, words by Peart); Prologue, I, II, III

<b>Vocals</b> lead 16% G1-G2-A3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 84% unison 35% contrapuntal 4%	<b>“Cygnus X-1”</b> 1977 – 6/6 – 10:21
<b>Bass</b> 70% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 75% solo 4%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 28%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 35% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 62% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 13%

7. **Archives** (1977, a boxed set reissue of *Rush*, *Fly by Night*, and *Careless of Steel*)

<sup>9</sup> Live timings here reflect actual performance times, not track timings.

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

## 8. *Hemispheres*

(1978, rec. Rockfield Studios, Wales/Advision Studio, London; prod. Rush/T. Brown)

### 1. “Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres” (18:04)

Prelude [4:29], Apollo: “Bringer of Wisdom” [2:30], Dionysus: “Bringer of Love” [2:06], Armageddon: “The Battle of Heart and Mind” [2:55], Cygnus: “Bringer of Balance” [5:02], The Sphere: “A Kind of Dream” [1:06]

<b>Vocals</b> lead 39% F0-C#2-F#3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 61% unison 7% contrapuntal 6%	<b>“Hemispheres”</b> 1978 – 1/4 – 18:04
<b>Bass</b> 77% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 85% solo 5%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 19%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 31% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 80% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 5%

### 2. “Circumstances” (3:40)

### 3. “The Trees” (4:42)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 28% G#0-A1-B2 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 72% unison 13% contrapuntal 15%	<b>“The Trees”</b> 1978 – 3/4 – 4:42
<b>Bass</b> 77% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 96% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 28%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 24% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 83% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 9%

### 4. “La Villa Strangiato” (9:34, instrumental, music by Lee/Lifeson/Pearl)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 0% backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 100% unison 25% contrapuntal 14%	<b>“La Villa Strangiato”</b> 1978 – 4/4 – 9:34
<b>Bass</b> 67% solo 0.5%	<b>Guitar</b> 99% solo 24%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 32%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 48% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 92% solo 0.5% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

## 9. *Permanent Waves*

(1980, written 1979, rec. 1979, Le Studio, Quebec; prod. Rush/Terry Brown)

### 1. “The Spirit of Radio” (4:56)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 35% B0-C#2/D2-E3 backing 1% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 65% unison 19% contrapuntal 0%	<b>“The Spirit of Radio”</b> 1980 – 1/6 – 4:56
<b>Bass</b> 84% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 100% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 7%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 33% guest yes	<b>Perc.</b> 99% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 2%

### 2. “Freewill” (5:21)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 47% F1-F2-F3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 53% unison 21% contrapuntal 14%	<b>“Freewill”</b> 1980 – 2/6 – 5:21
<b>Bass</b> 98% solo 3%	<b>Guitar</b> 96% solo 14%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 27%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 21% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 98% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

### 3. “Jacob’s Ladder” (7:26)

### 4. “Entre Nous” (4:36)

### 5. “Different Strings” (3:48)

### 6. “Natural Science” (9:17)

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

## 10. *Moving Pictures*

(1981, wr. 1980, rec. 1980-81, Le Studio, Quebec; prod. Rush/Terry Brown)

1. “Tom Sawyer” (4:33, words by Peart/Pye Dybois)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 35% E1-E2-E3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 65% unison 16% contrapuntal 0%	<b>“Tom Sawyer”</b> 1981 – 1/7 – 4:33
<b>Bass</b> 76% solo 0% <b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 62% guest no	<b>Guitar</b> 89% solo 10% <b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 4% elec. 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 34% <b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

2. “Red Barchetta” (6:09)

3. “YYZ” (4:24, instrumental, music by Lee/Peart)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 0% backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 100% unison 39% contrapuntal 30%	<b>“YYZ”</b> 1981 – 3/7 – 4:24
<b>Bass</b> 97% solo 2% <b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 21% guest no	<b>Guitar</b> 98% solo 11% <b>Perc.</b> 99% solo 2% elec. 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 17% <b>Speech/Samples</b> 3%

4. “Limelight” (4:19)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 54% G#1-D#2/E2-B2 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 46% unison 20% contrapuntal 13%	<b>“Limelight”</b> 1981 – 4/7 – 4:19
<b>Bass</b> 96% solo 0% <b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 52% guest no	<b>Guitar</b> 100% solo 17% <b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 4% elec. 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 41% <b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

5. “The Camera Eye” (10:58)

6. “Witch Hunt” (4:44)

7. “Vital Signs” (4:46)

## 11. *Exit ... Stage Left* (1981, rec. live 1980-81, Canada/U.K.; prod. Terry Brown)

1. “The Spirit of Radio” (4:59<sup>10</sup>)
2. “Red Barchetta” (6:32)
3. “YYZ” (7:35, instr. by Lee/Peart; incorp. drum solo; music by Neil Peart)
4. “A Passage to Bangkok” (3:39)
5. “Closer to the Heart” (3:04; words by Peart/Peter Talbot)
6. “Beneath, Between & Behind” (2:24; words and music by Lifeson/Peart)
7. “Jacob’s Ladder” (7:47)
8. “Broon’s Bane” (1:37, classical guitar solo, music by Alex Lifeson, intro to:)
9. “The Trees” (4:50)
10. “Xanadu” (11:54)
11. “Freewill” (5:20)
12. “Tom Sawyer” (4:39; words by Peart/Pye Dybois)
13. “La Villa Strangiato” (9:10; instrumental, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)

<sup>10</sup> Live timings here reflect actual performance times, not track timings.

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

12. *Signals* (1982, written in 1981, rec. Le Studio, Quebec; prod. Rush/T. Brown)

1. "Subdivisions" (5:33)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 40% G1-D2/E2-B2 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 60% unison 5% contrapuntal 6%	<b>"Subdivisions"</b> 1982 – 1/8 – 5:33
<b>Bass</b> 28% solo 2%	<b>Guitar</b> 98% solo 7%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 18%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 72% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 98% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 1%

2. "The Analog Kid" (4:47)

3. "Chemistry" (4:57, words and music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)

4. "Digital Man" (6:20)

5. "The Weapon" (6:23)

6. "New World Man" (3:42)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 62% D1-A1/Bf1-F2 backing 11% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 38% unison 0% contrapuntal 4%	<b>"New World Man"</b> 1982 – 6/8 – 3:42
<b>Bass</b> 97% solo 7%	<b>Guitar</b> 97% solo 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 89% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

7. "Losing It" (4:52)

8. "Countdown" (5:50)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 42% E1-C#2/D2-B2 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 57% unison 18% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Countdown"</b> 1982 – 8/8 – 5:50
<b>Bass</b> 44% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 95% solo 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 18%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 68% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 47%

13. *Grace under Pressure*

(1984, wr. in 1983-84, recorded at Le Studio, Quebec; prod. Rush/Peter Henderson)

1. "Distant Early Warning" (4:56)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 47% D1-C2/C#2-B2 backing 5% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 51% unison 21% contrapuntal 9%	<b>"Distant Early Warning"</b> 1984 – 1/8 – 4:56
<b>Bass</b> 84% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 96% solo 13%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 16%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 59% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 96% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 32%

2. "Afterimage" (5:03)

3. "Red Sector A" (5:09)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 45% G1-D2-A2 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 55% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Red Sector A"</b> 1984 – 3/8 – 5:09
<b>Bass</b> 0% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 95% solo 16%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 100% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 0% elec. 43%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

4. "The Enemy Within" (4:34)

5. "The Body Electric" (4:59)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 47% E1/G1-D2-A2/D3 backing 0% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 53% unison 0% contrapuntal 9%	<b>"The Body Electric"</b> 1984 – 5/8 – 4:59
<b>Bass</b> 80% solo 2%	<b>Guitar</b> 95% solo 9%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 72% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 88%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

6. "Kid Gloves" (4:18)

7. "Red Lenses" (4:43)

8. "Between the Wheels" (5:44)



[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

14. *Power Windows* (1985, wr.1983-84, rec. U.K./Montserrat; prod. Rush/Peter Collins)

1. "The Big Money" (5:34)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 40% G1-D2/E2-B2 backing 4% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 60% unison 2% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"The Big Money"</b> 1985 – 1/8 – 5:34
<b>Bass</b> 75% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 100% solo 17%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 61% guest yes	<b>Perc.</b> 98% solo 0% elec. 7%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 7%

2. "Grand Designs" (5:05)

3. "Manhattan Project" (5:05)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 43% B0-Bf1-A2 backing 21% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 55% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Manhattan Project"</b> 1985 – 3/8 – 5:05
<b>Bass</b> 56% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 70% solo 5%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 40% guest yes	<b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 4%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 2%

4. "Marathon" (6:09)

5. "Territories" (6:19)

6. "Middletown Dreams" (5:15)

7. "Emotion Detector" (5:10)

8. "Mystic Rhythms" (5:53)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 44% Ef1-Df2-Bf2 backing 6% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 56 % unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Mystic Rhythms"</b> 1985 – 8/8 – 5:53
<b>Bass</b> 41% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 89% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 83% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 97%?	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 3%

15. *Hold Your Fire* (1987, wr.1986, rec. U.K./Montserrat/Toronto; prod. Rush/P. Collins)

1. "Force Ten" (4:31, words by Peart/Pye Dubois)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 56% D1-B1/C2-A2 backing 7% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 44 % unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Force Ten"</b> 1987 – 1/10 – 4:31
<b>Bass</b> 65% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 81% solo 7%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 71% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 93% solo 0% elec. 0%?	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 18%

2. "Time Stand Still" (5:09)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 68% B0-B1-B2 backing 18% guest yes	<b>Instruments</b> alone 32% unison 3% contrapuntal 5%	<b>"Time Stand Still"</b> 1987 – 2/10 – 5:09
<b>Bass</b> 83% solo 5%	<b>Guitar</b> 98% solo 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 27%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 46% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 99% solo 0% elec. 15%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 8%

3. "Open Secrets" (5:38)

4. "Second Nature" (4:36)

5. "Prime Mover" (5:19)

6. "Lock and Key" (5:09)

7. "Mission" (5:16)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 56% A0-A1-A2 backing 4% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 44% unison 3% contrapuntal 3%	<b>"Mission"</b> 1987 – 7/10 – 5:16
<b>Bass</b> 45% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 69% solo 12%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 17%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 68% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 89% solo 0% elec. 4%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

8. "Turn The Page" (4:55)

9. "Tai Shan" (4:15)

10. "High Water" (5:33)

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

16. *A Show of Hands* (1989, recorded 1986/88 in the U.S./U.K.; prod. Rush)

1. "Intro" (0:59,<sup>11</sup> the Three Stooges' theme, etc.)
2. "The Big Money" (5:45)
3. "Subdivisions" (5:20)
4. "Marathon" (6:33)
5. "Turn the Page" (4:41)
6. "Manhattan Project" (5:02)
7. "Mission" (5:37)
8. "Distant Early Warning" (4:55)
9. "Mystic Rhythms" (5:32)
10. "Witch Hunt" (3:56)
11. "The Rhythm Method" (4:33, drum solo, music by Neil Peart)
12. "Force Ten" (4:51, words by Peart/Pye Dubois)
13. "Time Stand Still" (5:09)
14. "Red Sector A" (5:15)
15. "Closer to the Heart" (4:29, words by Peart/Peter Talbot)

17. *Presto*

(1989, rec. Le Studio, Quebec/McClear Studio, Toronto; prod. Rush/ Rupert Hine)

1. "Show Don't Tell" (5:01)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 61% G1-E2-C3 backing 15% guest ?	<b>Instruments</b> alone 39% unison 23% contrapuntal 4%	<b>"Show Don't Tell"</b> 1989 – 1/11 – 5:01
<b>Bass</b> 81% solo 9% <b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 52% guest ?	<b>Guitar</b> 93% solo 1% <b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 0% elec. 0%?	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0% <b>Speech/Samples</b> 13%?

2. "Chain Lightning" (4:33)

3. "The Pass" (4:51)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 68% F1-C2/D2-G2 backing 9% guest ?	<b>Instruments</b> alone 32% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"The Pass"</b> 1989 – 3/11 – 4:51
<b>Bass</b> 97% solo 0% <b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 54% guest ?	<b>Guitar</b> 97% solo 12% <b>Perc.</b> 97% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0% <b>Speech/Samples</b> 5%?

4. "War Paint" (5:24)
5. "Scars" (4:07)
6. "Presto" (5:45)
7. "Superconductor" (4:47)
8. "Anagram (for Mongo)" (4:00)
9. "Red Tide" (4:29)
10. "Hand over Fist" (4:11)
11. "Available Light" (5:03)

<sup>11</sup> Live timings here reflect actual performance times, not track timings.

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

18. **Chronicles** (1990, a two-CD compilation of Mercury Records' Rush songs, 1974-1987, plus "Show Don't Tell" and two live tracks previously excluded on the CDs of the first two Rush live albums—but later restored to those live albums)  
[See the original recordings, above, for the various songwriting/production credits.]

Disc 1:

1. "Finding My Way" (5:05)
2. "Working Man" (7:10)
3. "Fly by Night" (3:21)
4. "Anthem" (4:21)
5. "Bastille Day" (4:37)
6. "Lakeside Park" (4:37)
7. "2112" (parts 1 and 2, 6:45 total)
8. "What You're Doing" (live, 5:39)
9. "A Farewell to Kings" (5:49)
10. "Closer to the Heart" (2:52)
11. "The Trees" (4:42)
12. "La Villa Strangiato" (9:34)
13. "Freewill" (5:21)
14. "The Spirit of Radio" (4:56)

Disc 2:

1. "Tom Sawyer" (4:33)
2. "Red Barchetta" (6:09)
3. "Limelight" (4:19)
4. "A Passage to Bangkok" (live, 3:45)
5. "Subdivisions" (5:33)
6. "New World Man" (3:42)
7. "Distant Early Warning" (4:56)
8. "Red Sector A" (5:09)
9. "The Big Money" (5:34)
10. "Manhattan Project" (5:05)
11. "Force Ten" (4:31)
12. "Time Stand Still" (5:09)
13. "Mystic Rhythms" (live, 5:32)
14. "Show Don't Tell" (5:01)

19. **Roll the Bones**

(1991, rec. Le Studio, Quebec/McClearn Studio, Toronto; prod. Rush/Rupert Hine)

1. "Dreamline" (4:38)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 72% E0/D1-B1-G2 backing 21% guest ?	<b>Instruments</b> alone 28% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Dreamline"</b> 1991 – 1/10 – 4:38
<b>Bass</b> 97% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 98% solo 11%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 81% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 98% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 6%

2. "Bravado" (4:35)
3. "Roll The Bones" (5:30)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 58% D1-A1/B1-G2 backing 19% guest ?	<b>Instruments</b> alone 26% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Roll the Bones"</b> 1991 – 3/10 – 5:30
<b>Bass</b> 84% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 92% solo 5%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 74% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 0% elec. 16%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 17%

4. "Face Up" (3:54)
5. "Where's My Thing?" (3:49, instrumental, music by Lee/Lifeson)
6. "The Big Wheel" (5:13)
7. "Heresy" (5:26)
8. "Ghost Of A Chance" (5:19)
9. "Neurotica" (4:40)
10. "You Bet Your Life" (5:00)

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

## 20. *Counterparts*

(1993, rec. Le Studio, Quebec/McClear Studio, Toronto; prod. Rush/Peter Collins)

1. "Animate" (6:05)
2. "Stick It Out" (4:30)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 70% D1-B1/C2-A2 backing 33% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 29% unison 3% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Stick It Out"</b> 1993 – 2/11 – 4:30
<b>Bass</b> 99% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 99% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 10% guest ?	<b>Perc.</b> 93% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 0%

3. "Cut To The Chase" (4:49)

4. "Nobody's Hero" (4:54)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 69% D1-Bf1/C2-G2 backing 11% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 31% unison 0% contrapuntal 0%	<b>"Nobody's Hero"</b> 1993 – 4/11 – 4:54
<b>Bass</b> 85% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 97% solo 11%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 0%? guest yes	<b>Perc.</b> 85% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 1%

5. "Between Sun & Moon" (4:37; words by Peart/Pye Dubois)

6. "Alien Shore" (5:45)

7. "The Speed Of Love" (5:03)

8. "Double Agent" (4:51)

9. "Leave That Thing Alone" (4:06, instrumental, music by Lee/Lifeson)

10. "Cold Fire" (4:27)

11. "Everday Glory" (5:10)

## 21. *Test for Echo*

(1996, written in 1995-96, recorded at McClear and Reaction Studios, Toronto and at Bearsville Studio, upstate New York; produced by Rush and Peter Collins)

1. "Test for Echo" (5:55, words by Peart/Pye Dubois)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 54% E1-B1/D2-A2 backing 21% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 46% unison 12% contrapuntal 4%	<b>"Test for Echo"</b> 1996 – 1/11 – 5:55
<b>Bass</b> 98% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 100% solo 4%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 0%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 27% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 1% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 2%

2. "Driven" (4:26)

3. "Half the World" (3:42)

4. "The Color of Right" (4:48)

5. "Time and Motion" (5:01)

6. "Totem" (4:57)

7. "Dog Years" (4:55)

8. "Virtuality" (5:43)

9. "Resist" (4:23)

10. "Limbo" (5:28, instrumental, music by Lee/Lifeson/Peart)

11. "Carve Away the Stone" (4:05)

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

22. *Different Stages: live*

(1998, rec. live, U.S./Canada, 1997/1994, U.K., 1978; prod. Geddy Lee/Paul Northfield)

[See the original recordings, above, for the various songwriting credits.]

[Live timings here reflect actual performance times, not track timings.]

Disc 1:

1. "Dreamline" (4:59)
2. "Limelight" (4:19)
3. "Driven" (5:06)
4. "Bravado" (6:20)
5. "Animate" (6:23)
6. "Show Don't Tell" (5:22)
7. "The Trees" (5:28)
8. "Nobody's Hero" (5:01)
9. "Closer to the Heart"  
(5:13)

10. "2112" (complete, 21:07)

Disc 2:

1. "Test for Echo" (6:13)
2. "[The ]Analog Kid" (5:14)
3. "Freewill" (5:31)
4. "Roll the Bones" (5:53)
5. "Stick It Out" (4:24)
6. "Resist" (4:19)
7. "Leave That Thing Alone"  
(4:46)
8. "The Rhythm Method"  
(Peart drum solo, 8:19)
9. "Natural Science" (8:05)
10. "The Spirit of Radio" (4:54)
11. "Tom Sawyer" (4:56)
12. "YYZ" (4:22)

Disc 3 (London, 1978):

1. "Bastille Day" (4:43)
2. "By-Tor & the Snow Dog"  
(4:59)
3. "Xanadu" (12:07)
4. "[A ]Farewell to Kings"  
(5:53)
5. "Something for Nothing"  
(3:55)
6. "Cygnus X-1" (10:20)
7. "Anthem" (4:27)
8. "Working Man" (4:00)
9. "Fly by Night" (2:04)
10. "In the Mood" (3:24)
11. "Cinderella Man" (4:18)

23. *Retrospective I 1974-1980*

(1997, a one-CD compilation of Mercury Records' Rush songs, 1974-1980)

[See the original recordings, above, for the various songwriting/production credits.]

1. "The Spirit of Radio" (4:56)
2. "The Trees" (4:42)
3. "Something for Nothing" (3:58)
4. "Freewill" (5:22);
5. "Xanadu" (11:05)
6. "Bastille Day" (4:37)
7. "By-Tor and the Snow Dog" (8:37)
8. "Anthem" (4:21)
9. "Closer to the Heart" (2:52)
10. "2112—Overture" (4:33)
11. "2112—The Temples of Syrinx" (2:12)
12. "La Villa Strangiato" (9:34)
13. "Fly by Night" (3:21)
14. "Finding My Way" (5:06)

24. *Retrospective II 1981-1987*

(1997, a one-CD compilation of Mercury Records' Rush songs, 1981-1987)

[See the original recordings, above, for the various songwriting/production credits.]

1. "The Big Money" (5:35)
2. "Red Barchetta" (6:09)
3. "Subdivisions" (5:33)
4. "Time Stand Still" (5:09)
5. "Mystic Rhythms" (5:53)
6. "The Analog Kid" (4:47)
7. "Distant Early Warning" (4:57)
8. "Marathon" (6:09)
9. "The Body Electric" (5:00)
10. "Mission" (5:16)
11. "Limelight" (4:19)
12. "Red Sector A" (5:09)
13. "New World Man" (3:42)
14. "Tom Sawyer" (4:33)
15. "Force Ten" (4:31)

[Except as noted, music by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, words by Neil Peart]

25. *Vapor Trails*

(2002, wr./rec. 2001, Reaction Studios, Toronto; prod. Rush/Paul Northfield)

1. “One Little Victory” (5:08)

<b>Vocals</b> lead 66% E1-B1/E2-B2 backing 27% guest no	<b>Instruments</b> alone 34% unison 6% contrapuntal 7%	<b>“One Little Victory”</b> 2002 – 1/13 – 5:08
<b>Bass</b> 85% solo 0%	<b>Guitar</b> 97% solo 6%	<b>Odd Metres</b> 2%
<b>Keyboards/Etc.</b> 0% guest no	<b>Perc.</b> 100% solo 0% elec. 0%	<b>Speech/Samples</b> 1%

2. “Ceiling Unlimited” (5:28)  
 3. “Ghost Rider” (5:41)  
 4. “Peaceable Kingdom” (5:23)  
 5. “The Stars Look Down” (4:28)  
 6. “How It Is” (4:05)  
 7. “Vapor Trail” (4:57)  
 8. “Secret Touch” (6:34)  
 9. “Earthshine” (5:38)  
 10. “Sweet Miracle” (3:40)  
 11. “Nocturne” (4:49)  
 12. “Freeze” (6:21)  
 13. “Out of the Cradle” (5:03)

26. *The Spirit of Radio: Greatest Hits*

(2003, a one-CD compilation of Mercury Records’ Rush songs, 1974-1987)

[See the original recordings, above, for the various songwriting/production credits.]

1. “Working Man” (7:09)  
 2. “Fly by Night” (3:21)  
 3. “2112 Overture/The Temples of Syrinx” (6:44 total)  
 4. “Closer to the Heart” (2:52)  
 5. “The Trees” (4:42)  
 6. “The Spirit of Radio” (4:56, mislabelled in the packaging as 4:46)  
 7. “Freewill” (5:21)  
 8. “Limelight” (4:19)  
 9. “Tom Sawyer” (4:32)  
 10. “Red Barchetta” (6:08)  
 11. “New World Man” (3:42)  
 12. “Subdivisions” (5:33)  
 13. “Distant Early Warning” (4:57)  
 14. “The Big Money” (5:34)  
 15. “Force Ten” (4:31)  
 16. “Time Stand Still” (5:09)

27. *Rush in Rio* (2003, live, three-CD); see <http://www.rush.com> for track listings

28. *Feedback* (2004, eight-song “EP” CD of 1960s’ cover songs);  
 see <http://www.rush.com> for track listings

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