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PAUL STANLEY





Kwasniewski/Star

Three professors of high-energy musicology are Alex Lifeson (left), Geddy Lee (center) and Neil Peart.

RUSH ROCK & ROLL IN THE CLASSROOM

JOHN HERSEY H.S., ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Illinois:—John Hersey is the author of 'Hiroshima,' a lengthy historical novel whose explosive climax is obvious; for some reason it seems right that a mind-to-mind confrontation between 22nd Century rockers Rush and their eager-to-learn admirers should take place in the Hersey High auditorium.

The Plan went something like this: Hersey High, being one of those Progressive Centers of Higher Learning found in the affluent suburbs of major cities, features a couple of courses on rock 'n' roll ("Boogie, Its History and Social significance in Western Civilization," or some such rot).

These courses are taught by one Lyon (I swear it's his real name) Trainer, an English composition teacher who came up with the terrific idea of bringing in a Real Rock Band for his inquisitive minions to interrogate about the deeper meaning of pumping 30,000 watts through a couple of hundred loudspeakers at

10,000 pairs of drug-benumbed teenage ears.

And Rush, the Canadian power trio which has apparently been traveling backward in time since departing Toronto in 2112, fit the bill admirably.

It was to have been an enlightening experience.

We arrived (band, record company types and a gaggle of writers and photographers) to find a darkened auditorium, a spinning mirror-ball and the harsh strains of '2112,' Rush's epic opus of the future coming (at an irritatingly low level) from two large monitors. After watching a couple of lengthy slide shows set (after a fashion) to Rush's music, the heroes of the hour took seats on the stage and prepared for a confrontation with youthful genius.

"Where," asked one hand-raiser, "did you get the name Rush?"

"Nowhere," answered guitarist Alex Lifeson, "in particular."

"What do you think about Led Zeppelin?" asked someone else.

"I have a lot of respect for them,"

answered bassist-singer Geddy Lee, who is known for his tact.

And that's more or less how it went for the next 45 minutes. A sampler of questions and answers: "Do you smoke dope?" (Yes.) "What are your favorite groups?" (Yes, Genesis.) "How old are you?" (23, 23, 24.) "What happened to your first drummer?" (He got kidnaped by a Viking, he got run over by a streetcar, he lost interest.) "What kind of cars do you own?" (Two Porsches, two Mercedes, a Jag and a Renault.)

Afterward, in the back of the limo in a haze of mental fatigue after so lengthy a session of intellectual gymnastics, drummer Neil Peart pondered a moment on what he and his compadres had just experienced. They had met their fans—what did he think?

"Some nice ones, some ignorant ones," he allowed with a grin. "I expected it to be a little more—specialized . . ."

That's for sure. Nobody even asked about their favorite colors.

—Bruce Meyer