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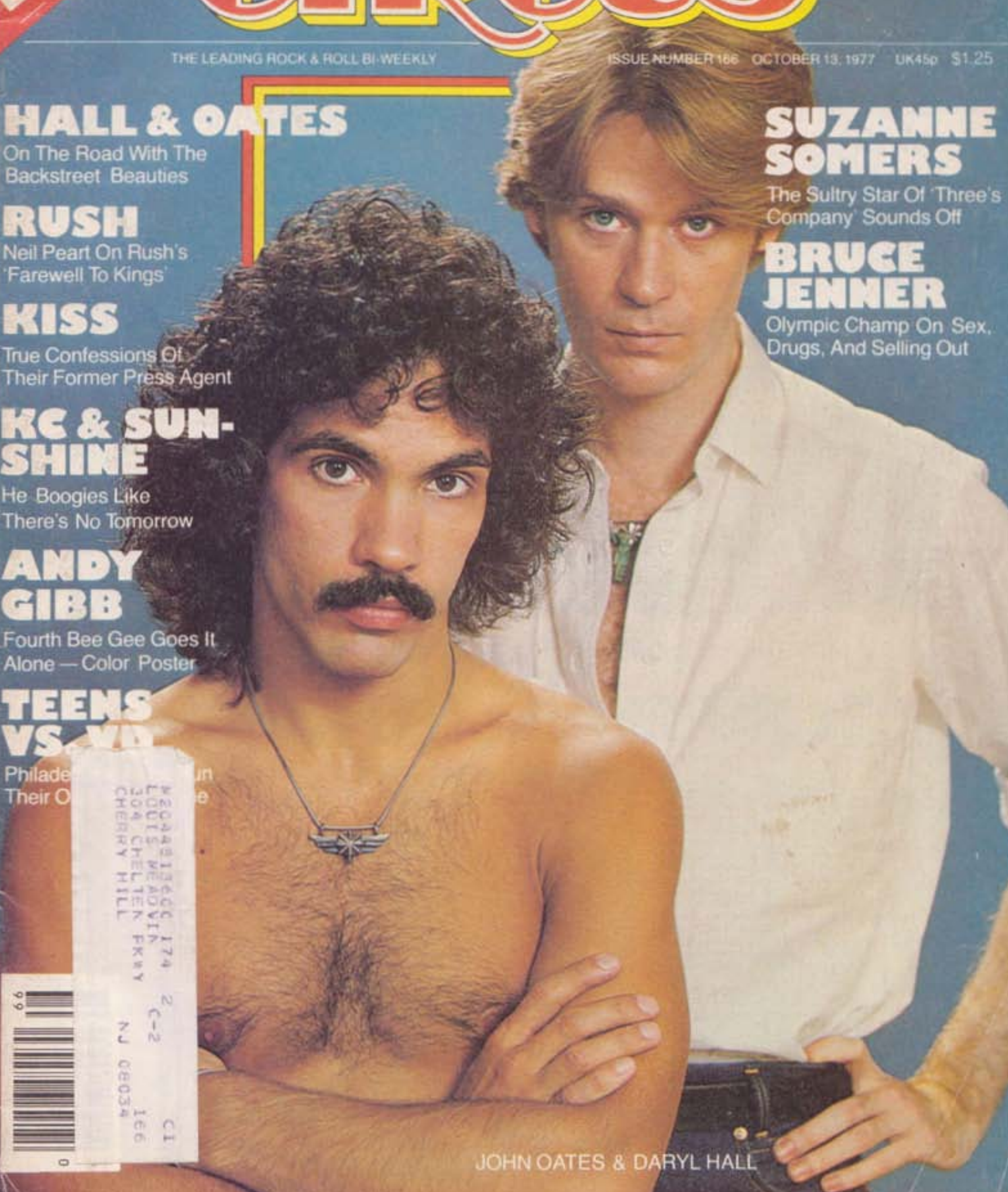
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by Scott Cohen

Neil Peart is the drummer and lyricist for Canada's goldmine, Rush, who have just released Farewell to Kings on Mercury Records. Part 2 of the Rush Tapes (Issue #167) will feature lead singer Geddy Lee.

Cohen: Is there a time in your mind when *Farewell to Kings* began?

Peart: Yes. During the mixing of our live album I stayed at home working out new ideas for the new album—it was really at the moment when the first one was finished. Far and away, most of the album was done in the studio and the last bits of lyrics were written while on the last British tour, just before we went into the studio.

Cohen: Do you generally write the lyrics first?

Peart: It depends upon the particular song. Sometimes the music comes first.

Cohen: Which song on the album came first?

Peart: The first one we started was "Closer to the Heart." It didn't get finished until we were in the studio.

Cohen: How long did that take?

Peart: About a year.

Cohen: And you retained the original version?

Peart: Yeah, in this one we did. "Closer to the Heart" is a bit different from any song we've done. It was based on somebody else's idea. It came from Peter Talbert. He's a radio and media person and a very prolific writer, so every time we get out there he gives me a big pile of stuff like this to take home. "Closer to the Heart," the title and the first verse, comes from him.

Cohen: Where are some other places you take songs from?

Peart: It's so varied. For instance,



The Rush Tapes, Part 1

Neil Peart Sizes Up 'Farewell to Kings,'
the Latest Canadian Rock Opus



Geddy "The Growler" Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart are Canada's gift to heavy metal.

there's one science fiction epic on the album called "Sigma Tech One" and the root for that came from *Time* magazine. I was reading *Time* magazine and they were talking about black holes and their approximate origin and I built a song around it.

Cohen: Do you write according to a schedule? Did you owe Mercury an album?

Peart: Yeah we have a system like that, usually every six months.

Cohen: And you like the limited pressure?

Peart: We work better under pressure.

Cohen: Did you go to college?

Peart: No, high school—I dropped out.

Cohen: What did you drop into?

Peart: Music. I wanted to be a professional musician.

Cohen: How long did it take?

Peart: Three years, almost.

Cohen: Would you say each member in Rush is equally responsible for an album?

Peart: Yeah, we have a strange balance, especially now after our fourth album. Each of us has certain specialties. It's an unusual chemistry; in my experience, there's more overlap than anything. Lyric writing is my outside-of-drumming specialty. Geddy and Alex aren't really into that as much.

Cohen: Do you each get paid the same?

Peart: On the road and in every case that we're under control, but then there's royalties for publishing.

Cohen: Where do you like to write?

Peart: Anywhere. The ideas for things have happened while driving a car or sitting at home listening to music. I'd say most writing is done

on the road simply because most of our time is spent on the road.

Cohen: Do you sing in the shower?

Peart: I do, but I have a terrible voice.

Cohen: What do you do after you write something?

Peart: I might write just one verse and a chorus and I'll have an idea for the structure of the song and I'll take it to Alex and Geddy and they'll tell me what they think and we'll bounce our ideas around—what it should be musically, what are we aiming for musically. But if the song comes music first, we'll just be jamming and liking the way it feels. If we don't feel unanimous, we won't go for it.

Cohen: Did you ever hear a piece of music you're sure comes from out of this world?

Peart: I don't have enough belief in other worlds, but I have heard things in the studio, under that pressure syndrome, where something musical is happening that's amazing. Where it comes from, though, I wouldn't like to stick my neck out.

Cohen: How did you choose your producer?

Peart: This was something we never had to do. We've always worked with the same man, Terry Brown, who is our fourth man in the studio. If there's something he doesn't like, we think about it twice. He's an important man to us in the studio.

Cohen: How did you choose the recording studio?

Peart: Once again, up until this album we've always been in the same recording studio. We've always been in Toronto Sound. This time we wanted something different and the decision was extremely difficult. We

Fin Costello



Neil Peart is the versatile drummer and expansive lyricist responsible for Rush's forays into epic rock concepts rooted in 4/4 time. They've replaced BTO as Canada's major force in rock.



Alex Lifeson and Geddy "The Growler" Lee round out the Rush trio.

Kwasniewski/Star

looked at a lot of albums we liked the sounds of and we pretty well determined that we wanted to go to Britain. Terry went over there and scouted around and he was excited by Rockfield.

Cohen: How long did the album take?

Peart: Actual studio time—three weeks recording, two weeks mixing.

Cohen: How much did it cost?

Peart: Ha, I don't know.

Cohen: Is there such a thing as Canadian music?

Peart: No, I don't think I can say that. Canadian music is half American and half European. A lot of Canadian music is essentially French.

Cohen: Where did the first music that excited you come from?

Peart: The first music that excited me emotionally, like Cream, Hendrix and The Who, I heard through friends.

Cohen: What kind of music were they playing on the radio?

Peart: A lot of West Coast stuff. This would be around '68. On the air you'd hear the Doors, Jefferson Airplane.

Cohen: Who's your favorite literary hero?

Peart: I'd have to say Ayn Rand's John Galt or Howard Rauke. Howard Rauke from *Fountainhead* and John Galt from *Atlas Shrugged*.

Cohen: Should there be musical books?

Peart: We did that with *2112*. That was her book, *Anthem*. Quite a few of our songs have been inspired by books. "Bastille Day" came directly from *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Cohen: Somebody should do *Lady Chatterly's Lover*.

Peart: There's a lot of books I'd like to see set to music, but when I think of doing a work that size I'd rather do something original because of the sheer scope of the work.

Cohen: Did you ever want to write a book?

Peart: Oh, yeah. I do, especially knowing a certain percentage of people were actually going to read it.

Cohen: Are you a good reader?

Peart: I think I am. I read fast and my comprehension is good.

Cohen: Do you think your music exists in mid-air?

Peart: I think it does. I'd say we were in mid-air. There's earthy qualities about our music and celestial qualities, too.

Cohen: Does your music look towards the future?

Peart: Oh yeah, we're future pointed.

Cohen: Would you like to be the Stanley Kubrick of Rock & Roll?

Peart: I'd like to be half way between *Star Wars* and *2001*.

Despite Peart's claim of "no specific Canadian music," Rush is fast defining their own genre of heavy-metal mythology.

Fin Costello

