



Rush

HEMISPHERES

In the beginning, in 1974, there was an album called "Rush" and a fresh-faced, youthful threesome from Toronto, Canada pounding out heavy rock rhythms in Zeppelin-type style.

Four years and another five discs later, in '78, there is an album called "Hemispheres" and a more mature, more experienced band creating music of a personal, highly developed and inarguably unique nature.

First taste of what was to come occurred shortly before the release of Rush's second album, "Fly By Night," when original drummer John Rutsey left the band and new skinsbeater Neil Peart arrived. Immediately Peart took a hold of the lyric writing reins and Rush's music, with the full consent of the two remaining founder members Alex Lifeson (guitar) and Geddy Lee (bass, vocals), began to take on a less straight-ahead, more mystical flavour. A third platter, "Caress Of Steel," saw this development taking further shape, with a whole side being devoted to the tale of a soul-searing quest for "The Fountain Of Lamneth." But it wasn't until their fourth album that Rush truly defined their role as epic music storytellers, scions of sci-fi and sword and sorcery as well as a rock band.

Entitled "2112," once again an entire side of the album was taken up with the musical relating of a titanic tale. This time around it was a case of future shock, a story of a society in the 22nd century living under the so-called "Temples Of Syrinx"...a race of priests who regarded music as a corrupt force and who reckoned that a guitar was 'a toy that helped destroy the elder race of man!' When such an instrument was played in one of their temples, and its joyous music filled its barren halls, the priests reacted with predictable venom. "2112," lovingly crafted, stunning and stimulating, marked a turning point in Rush's career, becoming a hugely successful album. In an attempt to acquaint new-found fans with their past recorded work, the next Rush release was a double, retrospective style live album called "All The World's A Stage." And later, in 1977, the band again broke new ground to Britain, encasing themselves in rural Rockfield Studios in Wales and recording an album by the name of "A Farewell To Kings."

Away from the bustle of city life, Rush came up with a pastoral yet powerful album, its by now traditional 'epic track' present in the form of the space opera "Cygnus X-1," a story about a spaceship pilot plunging through a black hole in space. And if you thought that Rush might have exhausted all areas of inspiration, then lend an ear to this, their latest album, "Hemispheres," in which - to borrow a phrase - they boldly go where no band has gone before.

Again recorded at Rockfield, the album contains just four tracks, two short, straight-forward and sensitively rendered ("The Trees" and "Circumstances"), the other couple high-powered, hot-blooded and often mind-blowing in their complexities ("La Villa Strangiato" and "Hemispheres"). It is these latter two numbers that show just how greatly Rush have developed over the years. The band call "La Villa Strangiato" a 'musical reconstruction of some of Alex Lifeson's dreams (apparently the guitarist is often plagued by the most vividly strange dreams) and appropriately it's totally unlike anything they've ever attempted before. It's many parted, multi-faceted and definitely deserving of careful scrutiny and many plays. Meanwhile "Hemispheres" itself brings an end to the story of "Cygnus X-1," which had its beginnings on the previous album, "A Farewell To Kings." It had, if you remember, a cliff hanger ending when our hero disappeared through a gaping black hole...never to be seen again? The "2112"-length "Hemispheres" number concludes the tale in an unexpected, unorthodox fashion - if you expected Rush to cop out and go for usual science fiction stand-by explanations of 'other dimensions' or 'matter transportation,' think again. "Hemispheres," through hard-hitting music and dynamic, evocative lyrics, tells the tale of a battle between the gods Apollo and Dionysus, of the intervention of the deity Cygnus and of the 'balance' he eventually manages to achieve.

All this, plus no small amount of rock and roll as well.
What more could you wish for?

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