

and to people, the whole thing, and that's basically what that was trying to capture.

**FEEDBACK:** So do you think people who opt for 'the safe way' are making the wrong decision?

**N.P.:** Oh, absolutely.

**FEEDBACK:** But do'nt you think the world needs accountants and factory workers?

**N.P.:** I suppose so. It's the old argument - 'what if everybody acted like you' Everybody does'nt.

**FEEDBACK:** What does the 'starman' signify?

**N.P.:** Oh God.....

Well, I hope you enjoyed this insight into the mind of Neil Peart. The concluding part of the interview will follow in issue 2 (which should appear in September sometime), when Neil will discuss, among other things, how he feels about playing Ireland, the meaning of 'The Fountain of Lamneth', his favourite RUSH songs, and the rock press. The conversation with Neil will hopefully be augmented by at least one other interview with a well-known hard-rock musician.

See you then.



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ROCK RECORD CENTRE

50p

# FEEDBACK!

## ROCK INTERVIEWS.



ISSUE NO 1:  
NEIL  
PEART  
OF...

R U S H



This first issue of 'FEEDBACK! Rock Interviews' consists of the first part of a 2-part in-depth interview with NEIL PEART of RUSH. The interview took place backstage at Wembley Arena, London, on May 18th. It lasted for approximately 1 hour and has been left almost entirely unedited. A very small part of the interview has been previously published in 'Hot Press' magazine, and I am grateful for their permission to reproduce it in this form. From now on, 'FEEDBACK!' aims to bring you in-depth interviews with leading hard-rock personalities from both the Irish scene and abroad, with none of the know-all journalist bull\*\*\* that you get in other rock mags cluttering up a good conversation. We aim to fill a gap by providing Dublin's sorely under-catered for hard-rock fans with a direct line to their favourite musicians. The quality (and longevity) of the magazine is in direct proportion to sales figures, for obvious financial reasons, so you support us and we'll support you!

Sean D. Naylor, Editor.

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(c) Sean D. Naylor 1983.

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Tim Cantillon  
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Printed by: Grafotone

Special thanks are due to  
Tommy Tighe, Tony Bradfield,  
Bernadette Coyle of Phono-  
gram (U.K.), and of course  
Neil Peart.



FEEDBACK: How's the tour going so far? You've done Birmingham and now London...

N.P.: I wouldn't call that the tout though. We've been out since September. It's a common British fallacy to consider Britain the centre of the universe, but unfortunately, to the rest of the world it isn't. So...um... the tour's gone very well. Like I said we started in September and we've been through America and Canada up to now and it all went very nicely. We paced ourselves cleverly this year and took time off at the right times and came back fresh, and the same thing before we came to Europe, and we were smart this time to do the continent first, before we came to Britain because it's a lot lower pressure and a lot less people hassling us all the time, so it was much more enjoyable and so consequently hopefully we came to Britain with a better frame of mind.

FEEDBACK: Do you find a difference between your British and American fans?

N.P.: Oh God, I hate to generalize. People always want us to generalize about our fans, but our fans number two million people right now, so it's kinda hard to generalize about that. There are subtle sociological differences, some are positive and some are negative, so..., in the light of that they're better not spoken about.

FEEDBACK: In terms of Britain, you've said before that you feel like you're 'living in a goldfish bowl' when you're on tour here. Is this still the case? How much can you get out without being recognised?

N.P.: Oh, it's absolutely the case here. It's the single hardest thing about working in Britain. Um...London's okay obviously because it's easier to hide. In any other city outside it's the reason why we had to stop playing a lot of the smaller towns in Britain because it just became humanly impossible to play Newcastle or Glasgow etc., because literally not only could we not walk out on the street, you couldn't open your curtains because there'd be people standing outside your window staring into your room, I mean into your life. And you couldn't walk out of the hotel or walk down the street of town, you couldn't...you were't free to do anything. It was just a constant fanatical mob everywhere, which we are unused to and very uncomfortable with. So it just became a case of trying to avoid this as much as possible.

FEEDBACK: How much do you feel that situation has changed now due to your policy of, for instance, not allowing offstage photographs and not promoting your faces as such, and just promoting your music?

N.P.: It helps a lot. It helps, yeah, definitely so... From a personal point of view I'd prefer to be left alone because I find it very embarrassing. I mean it's not a matter of feeling too good to be bothered or anything, it's just very embarrassing to be stopped in the street and have some guy... 'cos they do'n't come up to you as a mature person. In a way it's understandable but in a way it's not, 'cos I

was as fanatical a fan as anyone could be but I would never have dreamed of following anyone to their hotel or following them through the streets or trying to track them down or trying to call them on the phone or jumping on them in any way like that, you know. I could never have imagined doing that and consequently, when people do it to me I have trouble being compassionate because I know that they do not represent the real fans and they do not represent the kind of human being that I am. So that's difficult. I mean, I understand the fact that they appreciate the work and everything, and when I get letters... That's the way to communicate as far as I'm concerned. I spend a lot of time answering mail and I appreciate it a lot. You know, a wellwritten letter is something that gives me pleasure, and it gives me pleasure to respond to [it] and it's something that can be done on my terms with my privacy intact, and it allows me the good feeling of doing something nice for somebody, but not at the expense of me feeling good.

FEEDBACK: So where should somebody write then?

N.P.: Oh, I'm not gonna tell that. I have about all that I can deal with at the moment. Please, I do what I can.

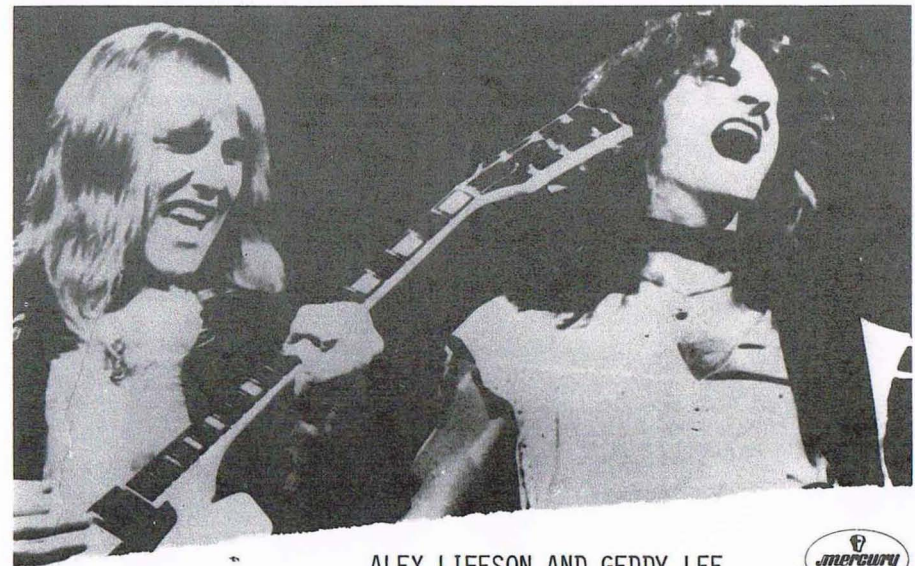
FEEDBACK: Do you feel RUSH are still on an upward trend, in terms of popularity?

N.P.: I have no idea about popularity. I think that musically and personally we are. That's all that matters.

FEEDBACK: Do you feel that you're gaining more fans from the newer music than you're losing?

N.P.: It's totally irrelevant. I mean, if we tried to judge on that, I mean, it's the cheapest kind of commerciality there is, trying to guess what people are gonna like, because we'd just end up another formula top-forty band, trying to guess what people are gonna like; so all we can do is try and maintain our sincerity, try and maintain our integrity and do what makes us excited, the same as when you start a band, I mean the only way to judge is to say 'OK, I find this music exciting, hopefully other people will too, because I'm human being and so are they'

It's a simple point of relation to me, and it's easy to try and get contrived about it and try and be calculated about it and you can see a hundred million examples of bands that do it, and certainly we are the exception for trying hard just to be spontaneous and sincere. We have to do what we think is right and we are gaining fans. There are people who only like what we're doing now, and there are people who only like what we did eight years ago, and for those people unfortunately it's a very sad case. They're still living eight years ago, but we're not. There's people who only like what we did in the middle period, and hate what we started out doing and hate what we're doing now. We can't guide our lives by that, we'd go crazy.



ALEX LIFESON AND GEDDY LEE



FEEDBACK: Can you sympathise with any of these people?

N.P.: No, no, not at all. I think it's very closed-minded and I think their appreciation of music is sadly lacking; and unfortunately to it's strictly a British phenomenon, because of the music press being so strong here and because of life being subjected to such narrow confines in Britain, which it is'nt in North America, there's a tremendous kind of musical Balkanism here, where if you like one style of music you're not allowed to like another kind of music. Where if you like RUSH you can't like the Police or Ultravox or Bob Marley and that does'nt exist in North America, and it does'nt exist in my life 'cos I like all those bands, and I do'nt see why RUSH should have to be another typical heavy metal phony band.

FEEDBACK: Well, that leads me onto my next question. A lot of RUSH's fans are, if you looked at the audience tonight, for example, 'headbangers', you know, 'denim and leather' etc., etc. who would rate RUSH alongside AC/DC, Scorpions, and Iron Maiden, musically speaking. How much do you feel RUSH has in common with these groups?

N.P.: Probably nothing at all. I do'nt know, I do'nt understand the association because, again, that kind of music is just as much contrived as any pop song on B.B.C. [radio] 1. It's exactly as carefully contrived to appeal to those kind of 'denim and leather' people. So if they think that they're getting something that's counter-culture, and something that's sincere and rebellious, they're being fooled, you know, and that does'nt make me happy.

FEEDBACK: But could you see the musical comparisons with a band like Scorpions, for example, and RUSH back in '76, when you had a heavier guitar sound?

N.P.: Ummm... I do'n't think it existed then. It's a funny thing the way...again, it's purely a British thing so it's hard for me to be objective about it because I follow music, I do'n't follow trends, whereas in Britain trends are far more important than music.

FEEDBACK: So would you object to being held in a similar light to these bands?

N.P.: I do'n't care. I know what I'm doing and I know why. I do'n't care, it just does'n't matter.

FEEDBACK: You mentioned a few names back there, Police, Bob Marley, Ultravox. Apart from these bands who are RUSH listening to these days?

N.P.: I would'n't generalize amongst all of us but I like those bands that I mentioned, I like U2 a lot, 3rd World, the new Joe Jackson album, all of Joe Jackson's albums actually, Roxy Music... A lot of different things, Brand X ...

FEEDBACK: Bearing in mind the stage-show - the amount of material featured from the last three studio albums in it, and the new style of stage dress - are the band making a conscious attempt to ditch their past?

N.P.: Simple fact: this is 1983. Bang! Obviously, we do'n't like to play music on stage that we're not comfortable playing anymore, and if we can't play it with sincerity and true conviction, then it's a lie to play it for people, even though they might take as a cheat, the fact that we're not playing the songs that they're expecting they're paying to hear. But to me it's a far greater cheat to go on stage and just go through the motions of playing songs that you know people will love; and we have to concentrate on the new material, obviously; and we look on ourselves as progressive and so consequently



NEIL PEART

what we've done before is necessarily naive and final. So the concentration on the new stuff is not a contrived thing by any means, it's just when we put together the stage show, we put together the things that we feel like playing live, and, let's face it, we've played those [old] songs hundreds of times.

FEEDBACK: I'd like to get onto 'Signals' now. Will the increased keyboard presence on the L.P. be a permanent feature of the band's sound?

N.P.: Again, there's no way of knowing. We go by what feels right at the time. We've never tried to predict where we're gonna be in a year's time.

FEEDBACK: Which numbers on 'Signals' were written lyrics first?

N.P.: Mmm, I do'n't know. They tend to become so combined in your mind after a while.

FEEDBACK: Do you see any danger of songs becoming mere vehicles for your lyrics?

N.P. No. It's impossible because the band isn't 'Lyrics... also starring...'. Where lyrics happen to be written first, I take them to the other guys and I have to defend them, and they give me a lot of 'input' into what's right and what's wrong with them. There's been times when a song has changed out of all recognition by the input that those guys give me about it, so it's not like I write my lyrics and say [assuming an authoritative tone of voice] 'This is the way it is, period', because we're a band, and so I bring them and I say 'OK, this is what I felt like to-day', and they'll look at it and say 'well this part's nice but I think this would make a better chorus', and they'll chop up verses and go like this and this and if I can see a way to make that happen, and leave my ideas intact, then that's wonderful, and a lot of times I get really excited when they go 'well, why do'n't you try this', and I go 'Yeah, why did'n't I do that'. None of us rule the band. That's the nice thing, we're a true democracy in the sense that we have equal respect for each other, and each of us have equal input, and so we can't be judged on the same terms as other bands are judged in, 'cos we're friends, and a lot of bands are'n't. That's something again that fans do'n't realise, they think the band they go to see, 'cos they all walk out at the front of the stage and have their arms around each other, then they must like each other, and then they go back to their separate dressing rooms, and go back to the hotel in their separate cars, they hate each other.

FEEDBACK: In 'Chemistry' could the line 'two to one, reflections on the water' be a reference to '2112'?

N.P.: No it's a reference to two lovers. [a bit of mixed-up, irrelevant conversation on this point follows] . That's a classic British example of over-exaggerating. No, no, it's about love, and the second part of it's about the three of us. It's very simple.

FEEDBACK: That song deals with relationships, and other songs on recent L.P.'s have dealt with man's relationship with the technology surrounding him. How do you see this relationship?

N.P.: Well, it's a greatly misunderstood thing. I feel that a lot of people are ready to blame bombs and guns for doing damage. I do'nt put the blame there, I put the blame on people. If innocent people are being blown up by bombs, I do'nt blame the bomb, I blame the people that put it there. If people are being shot by automatic rifles, I do'nt blame the rifles, I blame the people that shoot them. So that's a facile way of stating my whole philosophy with technology. It's a tool, and if it does evil, it's because people are evil. It's because people are small-minded, and they think that their causes are worth more thana life is worth, and that's part of what 'The Weapon' has to say - anything that is held up as being larger-than-life I distrust, because there's nothing that can be ever larger-than-life, whether it's political, or religious, or just some personal vendetta. Anything that you think is more important than a person's life makes me very afraid, because there's nothing that's more important to me than my life, because without my life nothing exists.

FEEDBACK: So you do'nt see Mankind becomming, as in the lyrics of 'Digital Man' reliant 'on the science of the day'?

N.P.: In a wonderful sense, as a tool. Science is only a tool.

FEEDBACK: Does 'Hemispheres' preach compromise?

N.P.: No, compromise is between a good thing and a bad thing. Limitations are a reality that you can't go beyond, and you can't say a band is compromising if they have to play a 500 seat club, and they can only afford two speakers and three lights. That's not a compromise, that's a limitation. But when a band gets to the point where they do'nt face the limitation and they choose to compromise their music or the quality of their performances, then it becomes a compromise. A balance is between two good things, and I think that rationality is good, and I also think that passionate is good, and I do'nt see any reason why you have to be one or the other. I think you can be both.

FEEDBACK: Ayn Rand [a writer whose influence Peart has acknowledged on several occasions] seemed to preach the supremacy of Man's mind over his emotions, whereas your lyrics often stress the word 'heart', e.g. 'Closer to the Heart', 'Let your Heart be the anchor, and the beat of your song' (from 'Something for Nothing').

N.P.: Well, I'm not a disciple, I'm not bound to anyone's discipline. And again, nothing is more important than life, and what I respond to in life, and what seems to be good and true, are the things that I write about, and it happens that I do'nt think being purely emotional is right, because that's how people get killed. A lot of people are being killed because of people's feelings, not because of their reason, so that,

necessarily to an extreme is bad, and reason to an extreme is bad, because it leads to the same end. If you have no compassion, you do'nt care, and that's a very bad thing as well. So either extreme seems to me to be bad, but both in essence are good. So, the point of 'Hemispheres', and the point of a lot of other things that I've done on the last couple of albums in different ways, is that its important to think, and that it's important to feel, and you can't run your life just on spontaneous feelings, and you can't run your life on cold reason either. You have to try to balance both, hard as it is, and I'm not trying to pretend that that's an easy thing to find, and in my own life it's not either. But the fact remains that I want both of those things, I want to be both passionate and rational, and I'm willing to struggle to reconcile those things.

FEEDBACK: Would Ayn Rand've approved of RUSH, and rock music in general, do you think?

N.P.: I've no idea, nor do I really care.

FEEDBACK: In 'Romantic Manifesto' she says 'modern music is not music at all'.

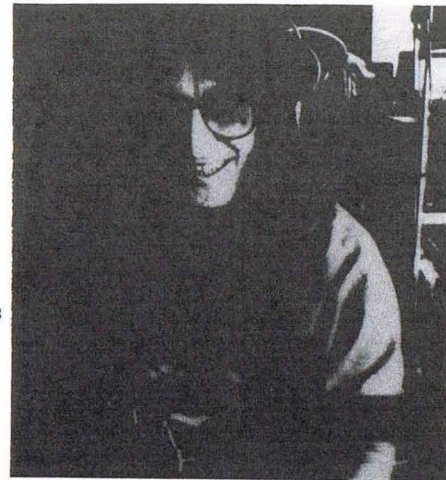
N.P.: Well in most cases it's not. It's simple marketing. It's carefully calculated salesmanship, and that makes me just as sick, philosophically, as it would her, or anyone else.

FEEDBACK: How much of the band's philosophy and determination aided their progress?

N.P.: Oh, absolutely 100%. If we had'nt had the determination, if we had'nt made a decision at one point in our career that we would do exactly what we felt was right, there would never've been '2112', and RUSH would not exist to-day, so it's absolutely, fundamentally important. If we had not had the strength of character and the courage of our convictions and the true belief that what we were doing was worth doing, whether it was successful or not, then we would not exist.

FEEDBACK: Have you changed any part of your philosophy during RUSH's ascendancy?

N.P.: No. It's grown and expanded but I think the principles .... What's happened is that in earlier albums I used to deal



GEDDY LEE

with very broad philosophical principles. Now I've come down to the point of trying to apply those to real life, whether it's my life, or watching my friends deal with life, or watching audiences, watching cities, watching the world. How it all goes on, and my fundamental values certainly remain the same, and...I understand a lot more than I did.

FEEDBACK: Do you regret anything you've said or done over the past ten years?

N.P.: Oh no.

FEEDBACK: There's nothing you'd change?

N.P.: No.

FEEDBACK: What motivates you personally? What keeps you going?

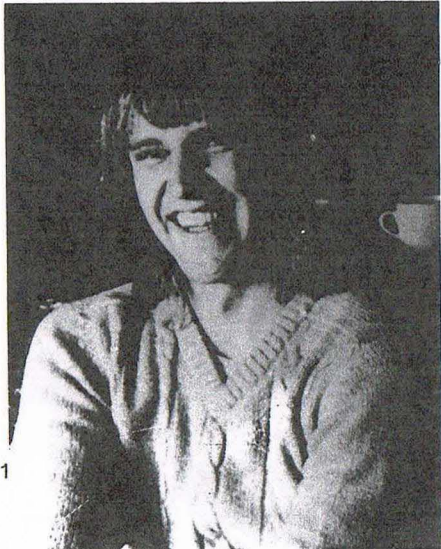
N.P.: Well, that's hard for anyone to say. It's something that's almost congenital, I think it's something you're born with. There's a certain exogence in me that never allows me to go onstage and pace myself, to think 'Well, tonights Birmingham. I have to save myself for London, so I won't play so well tonight'. Every night is so important to me, in terms of concerts, and when it comes to writing songs, or the studio, there's no excuse for second-best...It's a constant state of frustration, obviously, because no-ones perfect, and I never play perfectly, but I always want to, and I always try to. Sometimes it can mean that I have to live with that cross to bear. That's a kind of motivation, but it's almost negative in a way.

FEEDBACK: If you were'nt a professional drummer, what do you think you'd be?

N.P.: I have no idea. Life is too big.

FEEDBACK: You're obviously a very literate guy. Do you ever wish you'd gone to college?

N.P.: No. I have gone to college in my own way. Everything that's ever been known in the world is in books. The same as being a drummer. If you want the best drum teachers in the world, all you have to do is buy a pile of records, and all the best drummers in the world will show you what they can do right there, and it's the same thing with any kind of knowledge.



ALEX LIFESON

If you wanna know something, it's in a book, and if you want the best teachers in the world.... I mean you could'nt get a professor in college that would be a Voltaire, a John Steinbeck or an Ernest Hemingway or a Thomas Hardy. You cant get those kind of guys as teachers, but you can buy their books. The same for drummers - if you buy their records you can get the best drummers in the world to teach you in the privacy of your own home.

FEEDBACK: How close is your personality to that of the character in '2112', 'The Analog Kid', the 'Red Barchetta'?

N.P.: Oh, there's some point of relation certainly, but essentially they're stories, and you try to extrapolate what seems important to you. Sometimes I'm writing about my friends. In a song like 'New World Man', for instance, I'm in there, but so are my friends, and so are people that I do'nt know. You try and find something in you that might be universal. I think that, over the last three albums certainly, my goal in lyrics has been to find something that matters to me, something that seems important or true to me, and try to find it in the rest of the world. You try to find a universal thing. But some universal things are'nt important enough to me to go to all that trouble to write about, so I try to find something that's firstly important to me and secondly, involved in the rest of the world too.

FEEDBACK: So are the guys in the songs I've just mentioned one and the same person?

N.P.: Perhaps they are. I don't know, it does'nt matter. The principle in all of those cases that you mentioned, with the exception of 'The Analog Kid', at least with '2112' and 'Red Barchetta' is... There's philosophical principles and there's causes and effects, and positive and negative feelings of individualism there. With 'the Analog Kid' I'm looking at a period of life that all people go through. The youthful restlessness, that adolescent discontent, and the different ways that people handle it. It looks at a person that's in the throes of choice. What happens after that choice you see so much...again looking at people I know, and people I grew up with, some of them forget that (restless feeling), and other people say 'I feel like I gotta leave, and they go', which is the way I did it. I just said 'I feel restless, I feel like I wanna do something', and I went and did it. Everybody experiences that as an adolescent. It's a very painful and difficult time of life. Everyone experiences the discontent. Some people choose to take the safe way, and say 'no, never mind, I'll just go to college and be an accountant', or 'I'll just go get a job in a factory', take the safe way, the easy way, get married when they're sixteen, and start paying for a car or whatever. It looks at the period before the choice is made. It looks at, to me, what are the important feelings of that time, the sensitivity too of that time; what moves you; I remember myself in that particular time and how sensitive I was to nature and to cities