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ROCK

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Sexiest People Poll
Winners! Surprises
and Show-ins

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GREMLINS
E.T. Turns Vicious

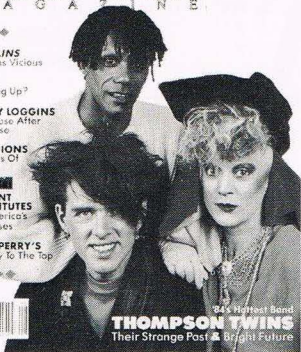
RUSH
Breaking Up?

KENNY LOGGINS
Cuts Loose After
Footloose

SCORPIONS
Masters Of
Metal

**STUDENT
PROSTITUTES**
On America's
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A Reluctant Rush To Success

*Canada's Best-Selling Group
Talks of Quitting Just At The
Peak Of Their Success*

by MARC SHAPIRO

After 15 long years of writing, touring, recording, touring, promoting and touring, Rush can relax and rest on its laurels. *Grace Under Pressure* has become its fifth consecutive top 10 album in the U.S. To make the prize even sweeter, the album merely didn't climb the charts — it soared, taking just three weeks to reach its hallowed position. For a group whose name more Americans associate with overnight mail than with music, the Canadian trio that is Rush can at last claim irrefutable popularity.

And what does lead singer Geddy Lee have to say about their brighter-than-ever future?

"It's hard to say how long we'll stay together at this," says Lee, 31. "There's a lot of things we'd like to do in the future, but if the three of us aren't happy and excited by what we're doing, I don't see us hanging around."

Lee does not refer to some distant future, either, when he speaks of the band's break-up.

"In some ways, I think we've reached a point where Rush is basically an album-by-album situation," he says solemnly. "One moment, it's like we're the band we've always been and will be around forever. The next moment, we're

thinking 'how long can I keep doing this, or do I even want to continue this?'"

If you're getting the idea by now that Lee and his two colleagues — guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer Neil Peart — aren't the kind of guys you invite to liven up a party, you're not far off the mark.

"We're low-key people who have never really felt comfortable playing the role of a bombastic, very public lifestyle band," says Lee. "It doesn't suit us. We're basically pretty normal people and, because of that, the role of the stereotypical rock star was something we never considered playing."

"The public's impression of us being serious musicians is right," says Lee in one breath, only to say in the next: "I don't think the public really knows us at all. They have all these impressions about what we're like but, because they don't know for sure, what usually winds up coming to mind is that we're a group of dour, serious young men who don't know how to have fun. And that's really a load of bullshit."

Bullshit or not, you really can't fault the people out there for their misconceptions about Rush. A decade's worth of press on the band





Rush: (inset left) guitarist Alex Lifeson, (center) frontman and bassist Geddy Lee, and (inset right) drummer Neal Peart

rarely has yielded even the remotely personal or strayed too far from anything musical. And the band's desire to keep things that way was made very plain by Rush's road manager, who warned that asking Lee what he wears to bed would be an immediate interview ender.

Lee, resting in a Seattle hotel room during the Western swing of the band's current tour, adds evidence to this notion. He's good-natured but cautious, and quick to sidestep anything that smacks of revealing.

"I don't want to do that," says Lee, responding to a request to describe the individual personalities in the band. "At least, I wouldn't want to do it in public."

But Lee is well aware of people's curiosity and is frustrated by a common perception of his band as the Canadian equivalent of Yes. Like Yes, Rush is a progressive rock band that's been around seemingly forever, whose music is relatively unaffected by the prevailing trends. This is a band that has produced an impressive number of albums (10) and impressive sales (four platinum LPs, two gold), more through their abilities as musicians and diligent touring than their originality or charisma. In short,

Rush is seen as experienced, professional and a trifle boring.

"There's a time to be serious and a time to be stupid. I know a lot of people are going to have a hard time believing this, but we can be pretty stupid at times," laughs Lee.

(Indeed, it's often forgotten that Rush's music and Lee's vocals were partly responsible for the big comedy hit of 1982, "Take Off," from *The Great White North*.)

As the conversation continues, Lee even throws some personal tidbits about the band to a hungry public. They're all devoted family men. Lifeson likes to fly and is a licensed pilot, and Peart is an avid skier and bike rider. Lee volunteers that taking in a good movie or a baseball game goes a long way toward shaking his frayed road nerves. "So you see, those dour old farts do have some fun," he says.

Despite the resounding success of their LP, don't expect any hit singles to emerge from it. The length of Rush singles, in addition to their inclination toward weighty philosophical and social statements, pretty much precludes top 40 airplay. For example, the group takes a hefty swipe at US-Canada acid rain pollution on this

album, as well as their usual asides about the Orwellian spectre of Big Brother.

"I'd like to think there's always been an element of hope in our music," says Lee. "I don't think we've ever painted a dark picture and left it dark. Despite the fears and realities in our songs, the human spirit has always triumphed. Our songs may be gloomy, but they aren't doomy," Lee chuckles.

"Gloomy" is enough to make most radio programmers say "thank you, next." But a chart-topping single isn't all that important to Rush. "We've never shied away from success, and we don't dislike the idea of being successful now," says Lee. "But how one courts success has always been important to us. We could have been successful on somebody else's terms, but we chose to be successful on our own terms."

And if that means calling it quits tomorrow, there will be no regrets, no drawn-out good-byes. "If it happens, don't be looking for any farewell tour or final album," says Lee. "We'll know instinctively when we've had enough. And when we know, that will be the time to quit." ♦