HIT PARADER'S

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GUITAR GODS

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EDDIE VAN HALEN

RANDY RHOADS

44

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ALEX LIFESON *rushing ahead*
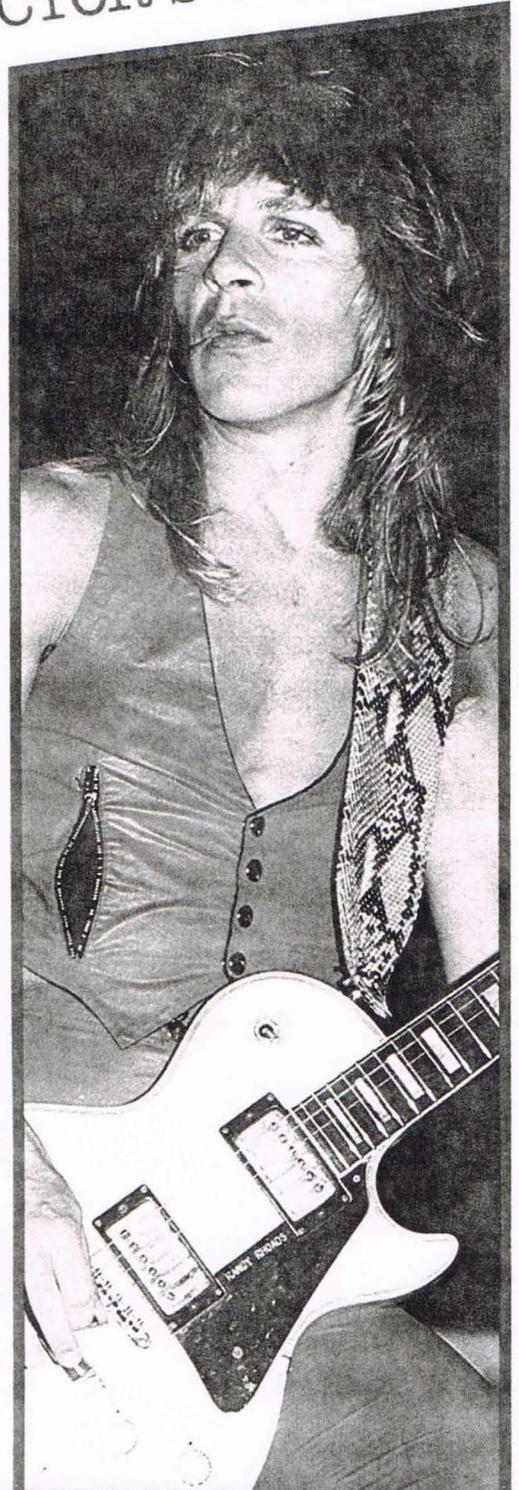
Cerebral Approach Aids Rush's Guitar Great.

by Andy Secher

Hit Parader: Alex, how has your role in Rush changed over the years?

Alex Lifeson: When we started we were a conventional hard rock band. We had a lot of solos, and a fairly undisciplined approach. Over the years we've become far more exacting with our style, and that's true for my guitar playing as well. On our more recent albums, I prefer to work totally within the confines of a particular song. I have no desire to overplay, even if I think I can play an exciting solo. At one time I wanted the spotlight; now I'm quite satisfied to be a part of the overall sound.

HP: How close do you stay to your studio playing in concert?

AL: It depends on the song. On some of the older tunes, I have a lot more freedom than on the newer songs. The material from **Signals** is quite structured, and I try to stay relatively close to the stuff I played on the album.

HP: If you had a choice, would you prefer to have more freedom on stage, or do you enjoy the regimentation of the band's more recent music?

AL: Sometimes I find it a bit regimented, but I'm very happy with my role in Rush. If I wanted to inject more solo time into the set, I imagine I could, but I have absolutely no desire to do so. I'm totally committed to Rush's musical philosophy.

HP: Does that mean that you'd never consider doing a solo album?

AL: As a matter of fact, I'm thinking of doing a solo project at the moment. It has nothing to do with my commitment to Rush. Rather, all three of us would like to try something a little different. Geddy Lee is also planning an album, and his would be very progressive, with a lot of keyboards. Mine would, naturally, be very guitar-oriented. It would allow me to try some of the new things that I just can't try with Rush. Neil Peart doesn't have any album plans, but he wants to work on a book of poetry.

HP: Rush is a band that seems to always defy categorization. Do you ever worry that the changes the band is constantly undergoing won't be accepted by the fans?

AL: Of course. We've grown to enjoy the relationship we have with our fans. They give us the freedom to experiment and grow, and in return we give them the best music we can. I worry, however, that one day we'll do something that they won't react to positively. But I believe you can be experimental as long as what you produce is of quality.

HP: Do you find it surprising that despite all your changes and experimentation, the vast majority of your audience remains the hard rock fans who got into the band years before?

AL: Not really, because no matter what we do, we're still very much a rock and roll band. We're still a guitar/bass/drums band, so that simple, direct sound is still at the core of our music, no matter how complicated we may make a particular song.

HP: With Geddy becoming more and more enamored with keyboards, do you find yourself forced to assume more rhythm-guitar duties on stage?

AL: To a degree, yes, but Geddy's keyboard style seems to incorporate a lot of the riffs he'd play on bass. He has a very rhythmic style. When he plays that way, I feel no restrictions at all. When he plays lead, though, I naturally have to assume more rhythm responsibilities.

HP: Is Rush still exciting for you, or has the success made you at all complacent?

AL: It's more exciting than ever. We're creating music that's challenging and adventurous — both to listen to and play. I've never enjoyed myself more. □

Ross Halfin
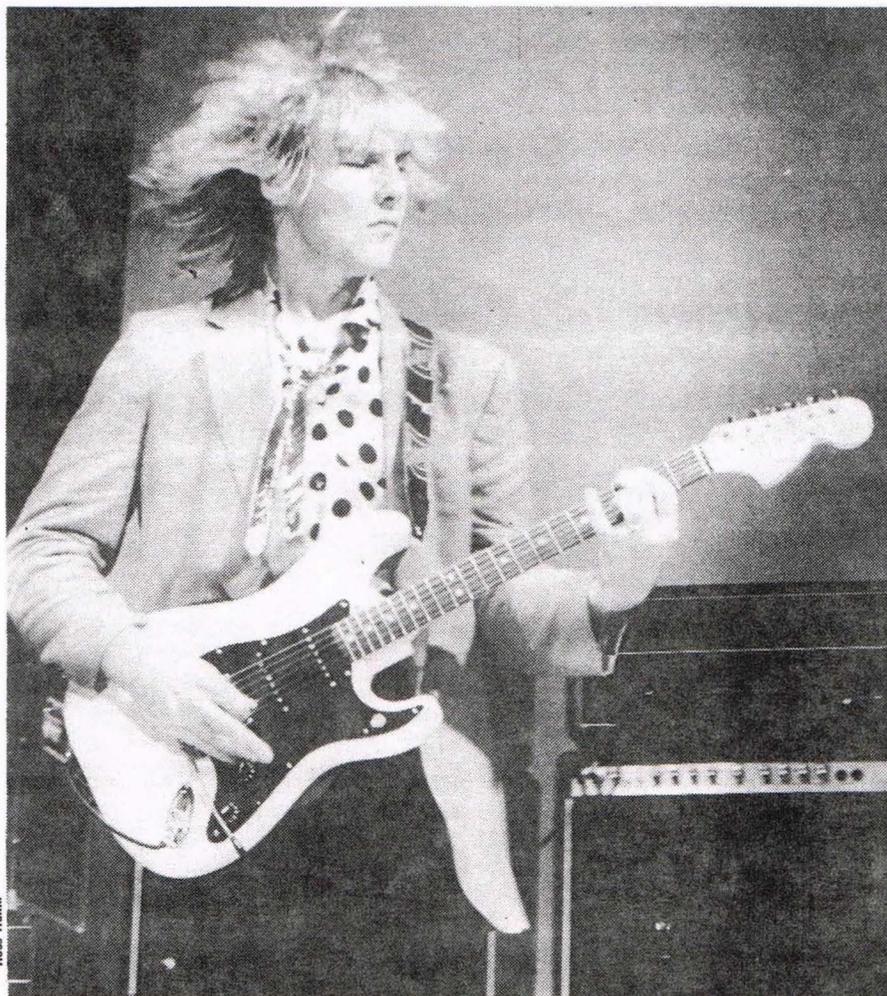
Alex Lifeson: "I'm thinking about doing a solo project."