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Well, here we are, just days away from the first show on the *Presto* tour. We've been rehearsing for weeks now, relearning the old and new songs, and it's coming along. As usual in a Rush show, we'll be playing a handful of songs from the newest album, and a good variety of older stuff — some 'standards' (seems funny to think of them that way), as well as some unexpected reappearances. When we began putting together the show, things went slowly at first, learning one song at a time, but now we are able to play the whole show in one go, so we know we're going to be all right. That old show-biz maxim: "All right on the night."

As always, there was a lot of work involved in preparing for a new tour, but especially this one; we were determined not to make it a continuation of previous tours, but a whole new thing: the first Rush tour of the '90s. So we had a lot to think about, in the music and presentation of the show, but those around us have been working even harder, booking the tour, hotel and travel arrangements, organizing technical requirements with the arenas, and — a job which becomes increasingly more complex and critical — preparing our equipment.

We have been lucky as a band to have spanned the time period we have. I don't mean just our *longevity*, but also this particular era. Rock music has grown so much stylistically, allowing us a steady flow of new influences, and the technological changes have been perfectly timed for Rush's development, from the first monophonic synthesizers to the current summit of MIDI and digital sampling. Every time we have asked ourselves if we shouldn't break down and add a fourth member, technology has offered an alternative.

This tour was no exception. Early on we talked of adding a keyboard player or a backup singer (or a keyboard player who could sing backup). We were open-minded about the idea, and gave it serious thought, but the idea never *felt* right. We like being a trio, we like each other as individuals and a working unit, and we didn't want to mess with that chemistry by adding another person, even informally.

So once again we're trying to do it all. Trying to cover all those frets, keys, foot pedals, voices, drumheads, cymbals, and triggers at their proper times is no cakewalk, and when I sit behind my drums during rehearsal and watch Geddy and Alex choreograph their moves to cover everything, I have to think again: 'Wouldn't it be easier to get another guy?'

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But no. Like little boys in the sandbox, we still want to have all the toys for ourselves. Or at least make all the *noise* ourselves.

And that's where we draw the line. We figure that as long as we do the actual triggering ourselves, then we're *playing* it. Like in "Scars," where the drum part includes eight different exotic drums — I'm still playing them, and it's still really difficult to do. (Somehow in the Puritan work ethic, that makes it okay) It's *not* just like pushing a button. And though a sound may be, in a sense, *recorded* by digital sampling, it's not like a tape that just rolls along; we have to hit the key or foot pedal at the *right* moment, like any note of music, and musically, we also have to frame it properly.

So yes, to answer the question nobody asked, there are sampled instruments and voices up there, but rest assured — we're *playing* them. The choices were difficult:

Do we hire another musician to augment our live sound?

Hmmm. . . No.

Do we just play the songs in a stripped-down analog-only version?

Hmmm. . . No.

Do we use tapes?

No.

Well, with digital sampling we can have all the sounds we want, whenever we want them, and we can trigger them ourselves.

Okay, yeah. We'll take that one.

Anyway, that's what was on my mind today. And now it's gone and there's nothing on my mind. So let's go on to some questions from you. . .

What is Geddy saying on "La Villa Strangiato" on Exit Stage Left?

Fred Laise

Gloucester VA

The translation was given in the credits. . . I guess you didn't *buy* it then, huh? Something about "baby needs new shoes." The real question that everyone, including Doug Trompak of Bull Shoals AR, is burning to know is: What was *Alex* singing in that song during the video for *A Show Of Hands*? Well, sorry to let you all down, but I'm afraid it's a non-story — he wasn't censored or anything like that. His vocalizing was impromptu and unexpected, and his microphone wasn't turned on! Yep, as simple and dull as that. As for what he was saying, it was something like this: "La la la la la."

What does the title "Force Ten" refer to?

Charles Henault

Goffstown NH

The Beaufort Scale — look it up!

What is the Omega Concern found in Power Windows and Hold Your Fire?

Brad Cokendolpher,

Boone's Mill VA

The Omega Concern is Alex's non-profit organization for Musical Scientists, devoted to the discovery of wonderful inventions. The Omega Stand, on which he plays his acoustic guitar, is one such, another is the stand which holds my rhyming dictionary when I'm lyric-writing, or the backlit lyric stand which Geddy uses in the studio to hold those lyrics. And, of course, not to forget the wonderful Album-Order-Deciding-Device.

How was it decided that "Mystic Rhythms" would be the theme song to the show "1986," and how did the band feel about it?

Trey Daughtry,

Richmond VA

I don't know how they came to hear the song, but the show approached us and asked if they could use it. Of course, they didn't *pay* us anything, but they said they'd give us a credit. How did we feel about it? We thought it was nice.

What is the meaning of the term "Gub."

Sharon Jones

Burton-On Trent, UK

See Woody Allen's *Play It Again Sam*.

Will Rush ever consider playing in Israel? You have a lot of fans here.

Yossi Leibovitz,

Rishon Lezion, Israel

Gee, maybe we've got a lot of fans in *your* house, but not in the rest of the country. Not to be crass about it, but just by way of illustration, I think our last royalty statement showed about six people who had bought our records there. Maybe *thousands* of pirated copies are sold in Israel that we don't know about? But seriously, sure we'd consider playing there, if enough people wanted to see us.

Is the writer you describe in "Losing It" Ernest Hemingway? Is it more than a coincidence that Grace Under Pressure is a well-known Hemingway definition for courage? Is the dancer you describe any particular individual?

Laura Harriman
St. Louis MO

Yes, the writer is old Ernest. I believe that the expression "grace under pressure" was actually coined by Dorothy Parker, to describe the attributes of a Hemingway hero, but I'm not sure. In any case, it seemed to describe the theme of the songs for that album, as well as the difficulties of life in the early '80s. The dancer is no one in particular, though partly inspired by the movie *The Turning Point*.

- a) I've heard some curious stories about "Mr Big And The Royal Jamaicans" in the Power Windows credits. Is there a curious story to this?
- b) In the credits for Metallica's Master Of Puppets, they thank Rush. Why?
- c) Is there any truth to the rumors that Hold Your Fire marks Rush's last studio album and tour?

William Jackson,
Chippewa Falls WI

- a) A curious story? Afraid not. They're cigars!
- b) Honestly, I'm not exactly sure, though it was very nice of them. Geddy talked to them a bit about the music biz in general I think, and I talked to Lars once on the phone about his drum kit. I dunno. But it was nice of them.
- c) Yes. Absolutely the last.

- a) Will there be any more concept albums in the vein of Grace Under Pressure?
- b) What is the significance of YYZ?
- c) Which of your albums is your favorite?

Geoff Vontz
Kansas City KS

- a) Since *Grace Under Pressure* wasn't a concept album, I guess I could safely say there'll be others like it! In fact, every one since that album has had that in common — it hasn't been a concept album.
- b) YYZ is the aviation code for Toronto International Airport, and the song is loosely based on airport-associated images. Exotic destinations, painful partings, happy landings, that sort of thing.

c) My favorite album is always the most recent I've done, and I have to think you'd be in trouble if that weren't the case. No, you wouldn't be in trouble, I would — if I believed that what I was doing now wasn't better than what I used to do. Happily, I've never had that fear. (Though plenty of others have had it for me, and they never hesitate to write and tell me so in the rudest terms. Oh well, what do they know about my life and work? Zip.)

What similarities can be found in the themes from Miller's *The Crucible* and Rush's "Witch Hunt."

Grant Dawson,
Congers NY

I'm not sure Grant, I haven't read *The Crucible*. But I will one of these days.

Do you guys think that your continuity (pretty phenomenal by rock standards) can be at all attributed to the fact that Alex and Neil are Virgos and Geddy a Leo? All your signs are very close together — almost a mathematical precision.

John Eric Michaels
Scottsdale AZ

Gosh, I don't know. I don't really believe in astrology, but I don't discount it out-of-hand either. It's one of those things "Mystic Rhythms" talks about — "we suspend our disbelief, and we are entertained." As long as the *President* isn't being guided by astrologers (I know, I know) then it doesn't hurt anybody.

Can you tell me why Alex or yourself has never sung the lead vocals on any of the past Rush songs?

Roger Glossner
West Chester OH

Roger, I'll leave that to your imagination. But I am no threat to Luciano Pavarotti.

In the 1987 Rush concert, you showed a video which depicted a death row scene (if I am not mistaken) for several minutes. I was interested in what B & W movie this came from.

Randy W. Magin
Greenfield MA

No, you're not mistaken. The movie was called *The Last Mile*, but I don't know where you'd ever see it. Maybe on the Late, Late Show on Channel 5.

I can't find anywhere, anything about these things:

- a) Xanadu
- b) Tobes
- c) a red Barchetta. Is it a fictitious car? From everything in the song, it could be from any time period — past, present, or future.
- d) Narpets
- e) Didacts — The closest thing to it being "didactic," which means "intending to teach." So are didacts people intending to be teachers? People with the intention of teaching? Or things intended to be taught?

Chris Harvey,
Saint Paris OH

- a) See *Citizen Kane* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kublai Khan."
- b) My friend's Dad always said "colder than the Tobes of Hell," that's all. I don't know what it means.
- c) There is such a car, or at least a body style. It means "little boat" in Italian, but I would rather leave it timeless, as you have perceived it.
- d) Play anagrams
- e) Bingo — a didact is a teacher.

In July 1980 you recorded an album called *Universal Juveniles*. Can you tell me where I can buy one?

Mark Paganelli,
Clinton MA

No we didn't. *Universal Juveniles* was by the band Max Webster, friends of ours, and we played, together with them, on one song called "Battlescar." As to where you could get it, I can't imagine.

I am interested in any information you can provide on two Rush releases named *Red Vinyl*. I believe Neil mentioned two singles that were not released with the first album, but separately. Is there any way I can obtain a copy or info on how to send for one?

Kerry Duprey
Barnstable MA

Ain't no such thing, Kerry. Two singles of ours were released on red vinyl (I don't remember which ones), which must be what you've heard about. There were no singles released separately from albums — everything we've ever recorded has been for, and on, an album.

Lyrics can form perceptions in people's minds subtly. How did you decide to name Cygnus's ship *Rocinante*? From what I know, *Rocinante* was a pony for a fictitious Spanish Conquistador. (Like there ever was an English Conquistador!)

Mike Cooper
Ontario CA

Whoa — I had to put this one in just because it has a *joke* in it. Nice one Mike! Let's have more jokes, people — it makes a nice change from all this deadly seriousness. Anyway, *Rocinante* was Don Quixote's horse, and also the name of John Steinbeck's truck in *Travels With Charley*. I just liked it, that's all. Like your joke. . .

Mike had another question too, but I didn't understand it:

In Hemispheres, there are three gods who are fused, eventually, in a dream, or sphere. To me, the sphere is a brain, with Apollo forming the ordered portion, Dionysus forming the more creative side, and Cygnus (The Link) developing into the Cerebrum and Cortex, the moral judgement center. I also harbor the idea that the hemispheres are just that, east and west, divisions (or subdivisions) of man and his mind. Which if either is correct in your mind, or do you mind as long as your music inspires thought?

Gee, um. . . yeah, that's it — I don't mind as long as our music inspires thought. . .