

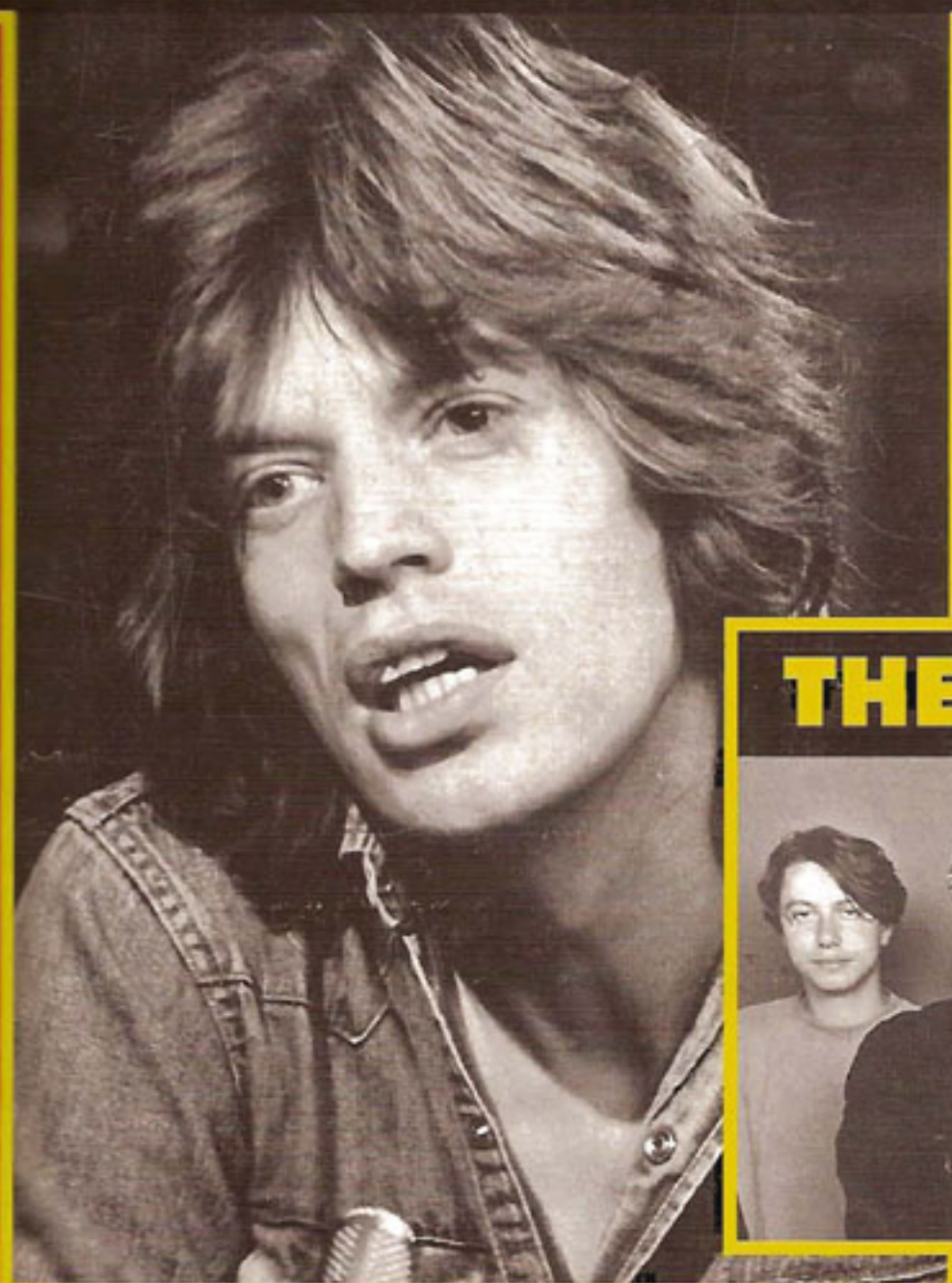
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# RUSH

CANADA'S PREMIER HARD ROCKERS REMAIN A CULT IN BRITAIN, AS STEVE ADAMS EXPLAINS

**D**espite releasing sixteen albums in as many years, Canada's most prolific musical export, hard-rock trio Rush are still relatively unknown to the majority of British record buyers. Too often dismissed as another pompous heavy metal band, Rush have quietly assumed the mantle of the most durable and progressive rock act in the world over the past decade. Popular amongst a loyal, almost cult-like following, the trio could easily have been more successful if it weren't for a series of near-misses on the singles chart. Hardly the development they would have expected when starting out as a basic hard rock power trio in Toronto...

Formed in 1969 by school-friends Alex Lifeson and John Rutsey on guitar and drums respectively, the trio was completed when Geddy Lee finally secured the vacant spot on bass and vocals after months of lending his amp to the others.

The young band trod the familiar local boards of parties, dances, hockey arenas and high schools before the drinking age in Ontario was dropped to 18, allowing them to hit the more lucrative but often disheartening bar-room circuit. Unlike many young Canadian bands who were forced to quit and find 'real' jobs, Rush survived their apprenticeship through sheer determination to record their first LP.

The first visit to a recording studio, in 1973, produced a sought-after Rush collector's item — a double A-sided single coupling the rock standard "Not Fade Away" with their own composition, "You Can't Fight It". Having failed to attract any record company interest, the band and their management funded the

release themselves, issuing the 45 on their own Moon Records label for home consumption only.

The group now rarely acknowledge this debut release, and since neither track featured on their debut or any subsequent album, it is the most prized possession of any Rush fan. Prices obviously vary but it is unlikely that a Mint condition copy could be picked up for anything less than £100.

By early 1974, the trio were ready to return to the studio. Still woefully short of money, recording experience and record company interest, they were once again forced to finance the sessions themselves. This situation led to a farcical predicament whereby the band would go into the studio overnight to get cheaper rates, often straight from a live performance earlier in the evening. These sessions proved so disappointing that most of the work needed re-recording under the supervision of local producer Terry Brown, who would continue to co-produce their albums for the next eight years.

Most of the material on the debut LP had featured in Rush's live shows for three years or more, and owed more than a hint of debt to their idols Cream and Led Zeppelin. The LP, simply titled "Rush", was released on Moon Records in Canada, and eventually brought them a major deal with Mercury south of the border. With the U.S. release of the LP, the time was right for the band's first American tour.

At this time, Rush's career reached a major turning point. Literally days before the tour was to commence, John Rutsey left the band, citing his consistent ill-health as the main reason. He is now a body-building

fitness instructor in Toronto. Rutsey's replacement, a tall, quietly-spoken powerhouse of a drummer, joined on Geddy Lee's 21st birthday, on June 29th 1974. Neal Peart, who had just returned to Toronto after a fruitless 18 months in London seeking his musical fortune, was to have a profound effect on the band's development. He learnt the group's material in the available two weeks, and fitted in well as the band toured supporting the likes of Uriah Heep, Kiss and Aerosmith. During the tour, Peart proved to be a voracious reader between gigs, prompting the other members to thrust the task of lyric writing onto him, a task he took on and continues to revel in.

After almost six months of solid touring, Rush recorded their aptly-titled second album "Fly By Night", in January 1975. A combination of punchy rock songs and Peart-inspired sagas, the record was a considerable success in Canada, earning a gold disc and a Juno award for the band as the most promising new act. Radio airplay increased, singles (which included the title track) charted well, and American interest was rising too.

## AMBITIOUS

The signs were all good when the band ventured back into Toronto Sound to record the follow-up, "Caress Of Steel", in July 1975. Making a further ambitious step into the field of complex lyrical and musical arrangements, the album featured an epic side-long concept track "The Fountain Of Lamneth", and an eight-minute sword and sorcery tale, "The Necromancer". Despite the band's delight at creating a highly original set of songs, the LP was an unmitigated commercial flop. The following series of gigs found the band at their lowest ebb — the 'Down The Tubes' tour might easily have been their last, as they debated whether to carry on regardless or succumb to record company 'encouragement' to produce a more accessible LP. Their decision to carry on resulted in the recording of an LP which would see a glorious resurgence — and final confirmation that their own musical values and beliefs were the right ones.

"2112" was recorded during the winter of 1975/76, again in Toronto, with the band harnessing their anger and frustration to come up with a hard-hitting side-long anti-communist sci-fi epic and a series of shorter, snappier songs.

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*The impeccably groomed Geddy Lee (left), together with drummer Neil Peart and guitarist Alex Lifeson. The Canadian trio have been somewhat quieter in recent years, although they continue to attract a large, committed following to their unique brand of rock.*

The album was welcomed by critics and fans alike, and became the band's first ever gold record in the States. The following tour featured a healthy proportion of sell-out dates, including a triumphant home-coming three-night stand at Toronto's Massey Hall. The shows were recorded and released as a double live LP, "All The World's A Stage", in September 1976. Initial Canadian copies featured a triple fold-out sleeve, and now fetches upwards of £15 in Mint condition.

At around this time, British rock fans were becoming increasingly aware of Rush, with import copies of the last two LPs notching up regular sales. This situation led to their British release and eventually a brief tour, which was a huge success. While in the U.K., the trio discovered Rockfield Studios in the picturesque countryside of Wales — the perfect setting to record their next album. Almost 18 months after "2112", the band came up with "A Farewell To Kings", introducing keyboards for the first time and including more lengthy epics in "Xanadu" and another sci-fi saga, "Cygnus X-1".

The LP was released in September 1977 and promoted with a North American tour followed by a virtual sell-out 14-date British trek in February 1978. To coincide, "Closer To The Heart" was issued as the band's first U.K. single. Available in both 7" and 12" formats, Mercury saw the release as a useful promotional device and added a selection of old tracks to the B-sides. The 12" also came in a picture sleeve featuring a brief biography of the band members. The single sold respectably well in an England gripped by punk fever, reaching No. 36 in the charts, and the band's live shows were the highlight of many a rocker's year.

Rush's victorious second visit to U.K. shores was not without controversy. A now infamous interview in 'NME' in March 1978 branded the trio neo-Nazi fascists. Concentrating purely on Peart's brief fascination with right-wing author Ayn Rand, whose work inspired "2112", the article paid no attention to the

band's music or live performances. A flood of letters both for and against the group appeared the following week, while the Rush drummer was forced to ponder a hard but valuable lesson about talking to the media.

Despite 'NME's efforts to the contrary, Rush contrived to stay in the U.K. and Rockfield to record a new LP. "Hemispheres" was released in November, and with only one track under four minutes long, there were unsurprisingly no singles released. In Canada, the LP was available in two limited edition formats; a picture disc and red vinyl version were both released on Anthem Records and have become increasingly rare over the last few years — either would now be worth around £20.

### HIGHLIGHTS

While the band were recording the album, Mercury encouraged their emerging following to grab copies of the first three LPs by releasing them as a triple album set under the title "Archives", clumsily packaged in a double LP sleeve. Meanwhile, their Dutch counterparts released a compilation of the band's highlights to date under the title "Rush Through Time". Available initially as a picture disc, this is a popular collector's item, carrying a value of about £30. The LP was reissued in 1981 (not in picture disc), with so many copies readily available in the U.K. that it could almost be classified as a legitimate British release.

After the now obligatory U.K. tour in mid-1979, the band opted to record their next LP in Canada, at Le Studio in Montreal. "Permanent Waves" was released on the first day of the new decade, and marked a dramatic change in the band's style. Gone were the lengthy sci-fi/fantasy stories, replaced by more concise tunes with contemporary lyrics — Rush had moved into the real world. They walked straight into controversy with the album's sleeve design, however, with the Chicago Tribune banning them from using their erroneous front-page

splash 'Dewey Defeats Truman' from the 1948 presidential election, while Coca-Cola also objected to their logo appearing in the background. Both were removed, but some copies featuring the original artwork did apparently filter through and are obviously much sought-after.

Despite the cover problems, "Permanent Waves" stormed into the chart on both sides of the Atlantic, becoming the trio's most successful LP to date. The opening track, "Spirit Of Radio", also proved a popular single release, giving the band their first real British hit, peaking at No. 13 in February 1980. Since the band had not made a video, Rush fans were faced with the indignity of a "Top Of The Pops" airing to the dancing of Pan's People! The single was available in 7" and 12" formats, each featuring previously released album tracks on the flip-side.

To consolidate their recent successes, the band's next move was to record a second live LP on their sell-out British tour of June 1980. However, despite recording a number of dates, they felt the creative juices were flowing to such a degree that a new studio LP would be a better idea. During the summer pre-production period, they joined forces with fellow Canadians and friends Max Webster, to record the track "Battlescar". The two bands had long held each other in high esteem, the Websters having just supported Rush on tour, and their unification in Toronto's Phase One studios on July 28th was extraordinary. The two groups recorded the track live, a crashing rocker with thunderous anti-establishment sentiments, finally living up to their nicknames of 'Maple Leaf mayhem merchants'.

Not exactly prime-time radio listening, the single bombed. It shouldn't be too difficult to pick up, however, either as a single (Mercury MER 59) or on Max Webster's "Universal Juveniles" LP, and is well worth the search. The track might well have featured on Rush's next studio LP, as the original plan had been for them to record it alone. Once the duet idea came into play, it was agreed that

whichever band finished their LP first could claim it. Rush spent too long putting "Moving Pictures" together and lost the race.

"Moving Pictures" was released in February 1981 to unprecedented commercial and critical success. Entering the U.K. charts at No. 3, the LP signalled that Rush had really arrived in the big league and totally vindicated their decision to shelve the live album. Again featuring shorter, more contemporary numbers, one of the album's highlights was "Tom Sawyer", co-written with Max Webster's lyricist Pye Dubois, and a huge success on radio stations throughout America. Surprisingly, then, the British record company chose to release "Vital Signs", a choppy ska-style rocker with a nod towards the Police's brand of white reggae. Disappointingly, it peaked at No. 41, one place away from the all-important Top 40, and associated radio playlists. This was to prove all too regular an occurrence for Rush single releases. Once again, the 7" and 12" featured a clutch of oldies on their B-sides, while a one-sided promo version of the single became a fairly common sight at record fairs.

## ACOUSTIC

Rush recorded a number of shows at the Montreal Forum on the 'Moving Pictures' tour, and during the summer of 1981, Terry Brown sifted through them along with the 1980 British tapes to put together the double live LP, "Exit... Stage Left", released in October 1981. The album featured one previously unreleased track, a short acoustic instrumental by Alex called "Broon's Bane", dedicated to the album's producer. Rush toured the U.K. to promote the live LP with a corresponding single; "Tom Sawyer" finally getting the U.K. release it deserved months earlier. This was the live version, however, and gave the band their second excursion into the British charts, peaking at No. 25. This time, the "Top Of The Pops" appearance showed a clip from the live video, also recorded in Montreal. The other tracks on the "Tom Sawyer" release were also from the live LP.

The album (again Top 10), single and sell-out tour wrapped up the most successful year in the band's history, reflected in their cleaning up of reader's polls throughout the U.K. and America. In an attempt to cash in, Mercury released the Scottish-recorded and Glaswegian-assisted "Closer To The Heart"

in a shot at the Xmas market. Backed with another live cut from the album, the single (7" only) failed miserably.

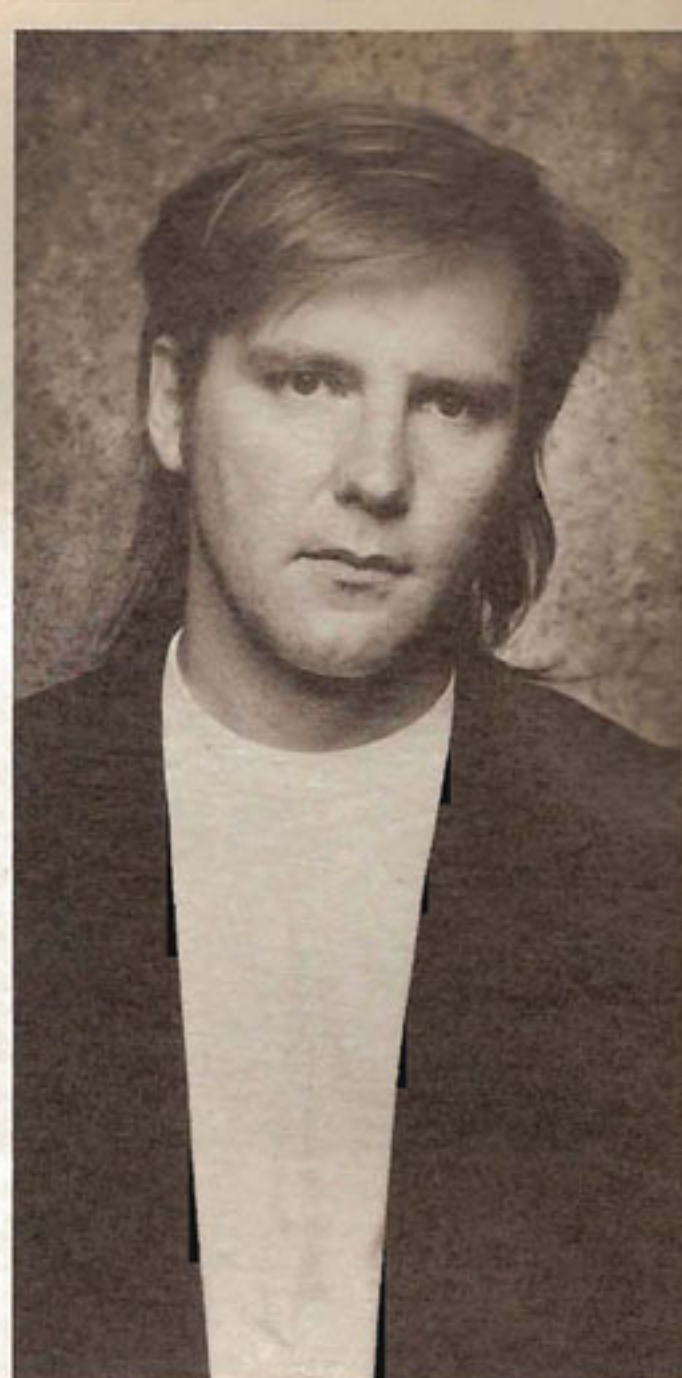
After a winter break, the band returned to Montreal in the spring of 1982 to record their ninth studio LP, "Signals", eventually released in September. Owing an even greater debt to their new-found British influences (including the Police, Visage and Ultravox), the album was far more keyboard orientated, marking a complete departure from the traditional power trio format. Needless to say, it sold well enough to reach the Top 5, but many fans were disappointed with the new style and distinct lack of guitar solos.

The first single from the album, "New World Man", was issued in August and is of particular interest since it is the band's first U.K. single to feature a previously unreleased track on the B-side, a live version of "Vital Signs" recorded during the "Exit" sessions. Once again, the single missed out on the Top 40, peaking at 42. A particularly nice 12" promo of the single found its way into the American radio stations in a clear vinyl format — copies are now worth £25 and upwards.

After failing to crack the charts with the album's obvious first choice single, Mercury took the previously unprecedented step of releasing a follow-up in October. "Subdivisions" appeared in the usual 7" and 12" formats as well as becoming the band's first U.K. picture disc. With the B-sides featuring only previously released live tracks, even the promotion and interest of a special edition could not prevent its failure in the marketplace. Unbelievably, a third single was released to coincide with the band's European tour in May 1983, coupling "Countdown" with "New World Man". A limited edition space shuttle-shaped picture disc has gone on to be a favourite among Rush fans, whilst the 12" is also desirable as it features excerpts from a radio interview with the band. The brief clips, surprisingly integrated into the single's main track were culled from "The Signals Radio Special", an hour-long double LP released to American radio stations. It features the entire album as well as discussion between the band and interviewer Andre Tilk, and was distributed by Rush's own label Anthem. It can usually be tracked down for about £50. Meanwhile, the interesting releases encouraged concert-going fans to splash out and put "Countdown" into the charts for one week at No. 36.

After being somewhat disappointed with "Signals", the band decided that a change in co-producer might give the next LP the appropriate shot in the arm. After much debate, Steve (U2/Gabriel/Simple Minds) Lillywhite was approached and booked for the sessions. However, at the last minute he backed down, leaving them with expensive studio time looming. A frantic scouting trip unearthed Peter Henderson, best known for his work with Supertramp, who took the helm for "Grace Under Pressure". The LP saw a complete switch from the "Signals" approach, with guitars screaming back to the fore and keyboards playing the support role. With dark overtones and a generally bleak and almost depressive feel throughout, it later transpired that this album had been the band's worst and longest studio experience.

The LP was released in April 1984, entering and peaking in the charts at No. 4: the fans were obviously still around. A single, "The Body Electric", followed, accompanied by the band's most ambitious and expensive video — never seen on British televisions. The single, in 7", 10", red vinyl and 12", sold poorly.



Guitarist Alex Lifeson was a founder member of Rush and has been with the band since 1969.

Surprisingly, the limited edition 10" red vinyl version is far easier to find than the regular 12", which disappeared almost immediately and has become one of the band's rarest U.K. releases. One of the new album's most popular tracks was "Red Sector A", released as a single in the U.S.A. and accompanied by a DJ-only 7" and 12" in red vinyl — soon surfacing at record fairs, and now worth £20.

The ensuing tour omitted Europe in favour of Rush's first ever Japanese dates, which included a sell-out appearance at the much revered Budokan in Tokyo. The Oriental shows drew collectors' attentions to the band's Japanese single releases, which have gone on to become some of the rarest. There are only four, all in typically extravagant sleeves with lyric sheets, and they are "Closer To The Heart" (1977), "Afterimage" (1984), and "The Big Money" and "Mystic Rhythms" (1985).

## IMPORTANT

An important element of the 'Grace Under Pressure' tour was the choice of British rock guitarist Gary Moore and his band as the support act. The two groups got on famously and Moore recommended his producer Peter Collins as a possible contender for the next Rush LP. When the band returned to the studios (in Montserrat, Oxford and London) in the spring of 1985, Collins was with them. After all but producing the last album themselves, the latest studio experience was much easier and more enjoyable, with Collins offering much more input on song arrangement. He even encouraged the band to try out new ideas and over-produce material rather than limit themselves by live reproduction considerations.

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featuring on two of the album's most memorable tracks, "Manhattan Project" and "Marathon". "Power Windows" was released in November 1985, again reaching the Top 10 in the U.K., and later followed by a picture disc version aimed at the yuletide shopper.

The only single from the LP in Britain, "The Big Money", again failed to make the grade, despite being made available in four separate formats. Of these, a 7" double-pack featured an extra single coupling "Closer To The Heart" with "Spirit Of Radio", while the more enjoyable release was a gatefold 7" with window cover. None of these featured new material, but the 12" had a live version of "Red Sector A" taken from the as-yet unreleased video, "Grace Under Pressure Tour", recorded in Toronto in September 1984.

## SOJOURN

The following tour to promote "Power Windows" was again a big success, but disappointingly failed to reach Europe despite claims to the contrary by Alex Lifeson on a brief U.K. TV appearance on "Whistle Test". The tour ended in California in May 1986 and Rush began their usual summer sojourn, during which time Neil Peart recorded an incredible percussion instrumental for inclusion as a flexi-disc freebie with "Modern Drummer" magazine. The track, "Pieces Of Eight", is a thoroughly entertaining four-and-a-half minutes of frippery, featuring electronic sampling and acoustic drums. The issue (May 187) was originally available in many U.K. retail outlets and should still be obtainable from the American publishers. This release is the only time any member of the band has appeared solo, though they have all contributed to tracks by other artists and bands at various times.

The band re-convened in September to begin work on the new LP, with Peter Collins still keen for them to further develop any modest ideas into grander productions. This again resulted in the appearance of an orchestra, but it also meant a female voice on the album — "Til Tuesday's Aimee Mann guesting on the album's killer track, "Time Stand Still". With a gentle melody and basic human emotional subject (a plea to "freeze this moment a little bit longer"), this looked like a surefire hit as the first single, released with the album "Hold Your Fire" in November 1987. An over-the-top marketing



Rush pictured back in September 1987. The band was on the verge of a comeback with their "Hold Your Fire" album issued in November. A 3-disc compilation, "Chronicles", is just out.

## RUSH COMPLETE UK DISCOGRAPHY

Cat. No	Title	Current Mint Value
Mercury RUSH 7	CLOSER TO THE HEART/BASTILLE DAY/TEMPLES OF SYRINX (1/78, no p/s, No. 36)	£4
Mercury RUSH 12	CLOSER TO THE HEART/BASTILLE DAY/TEMPLES OF SYRINX (12", 1/78)	£8
Mercury RADIO 7	SPIRIT OF RADIO/THE TREES (2/80, No. 13)	£3
Mercury RADIO 12	SPIRIT OF RADIO/THE TREES/WORKING MAN (12", 2/80)	£6
Mercury VITAL 7	VITAL SIGNS/IN THE MOOD (3/81, No. 41)	£3
Mercury VITAL 12	VITAL SIGNS/IN THE MOOD/A PASSAGE TO BANGKOK/CIRCUMSTANCES (12")	£5
Mercury EXIT 7	TOM SAWYER (live)/A PASSAGE TO BANGKOK (live) (10/81, No. 25)	£3
Mercury EXIT 12	TOM SAWYER (live)/A PASSAGE TO BANGKOK (live)/RED BARCHETTA (live) (12")	£5
Mercury RUSH 1	CLOSER TO THE HEART (live)/THE TREES (live) (12/81)	£3
Mercury RUSH 8	NEW WORLD MAN/VITAL SIGNS (live) (8/82, No. 42)	£3
Mercury RUSH 812	NEW WORLD MAN/VITAL SIGNS (live)/FREEWILL (live) (12", 8/82)	£5
Mercury RUSH 9	SUBDIVISIONS/RED BARCHETTA (live) (10/82, No. 53)	£3
Mercury RUSH P9	SUBDIVISIONS/RED BARCHETTA (live) (picture disc, 10/82)	£6
Mercury RUSH 912	SUBDIVISIONS/RED BARCHETTA (live)/JACOB'S LADDER (live) (12", 10/82)	£5
Mercury RUSH 10	COUNTDOWN/NEW WORLD MAN (4/83, No. 36)	£3
Mercury RUSH 10	COUNTDOWN/NEW WORLD MAN (shaped picture disc, 4/83)	£10
Mercury RUSH 1012	COUNTDOWN/NEW WORLD MAN/SPIRIT OF RADIO (live)/ Excerpts from an Interview (12", 4/83)	£5
Vertigo RUSH 11	THE BODY ELECTRIC/THE ANALOG KID (5/84, No. 56)	£3
Vertigo RUSH 1110	THE BODY ELECTRIC/THE ANALOG KID/DISTANT EARLY WARNING (10", red vinyl)	£5
Vertigo RUSH 1112	THE BODY ELECTRIC/THE ANALOG KID/DISTANT EARLY WARNING (12", 5/84)	£12
Vertigo RUSH 12	THE BIG MONEY/TERRITORIES (10/85, No. 46)	£2.50
Vertigo RUSH G12	THE BIG MONEY/MIDDLETOWN DREAMS (gatefold sleeve, 10/85)	£4

Continued Overleaf

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strategy saw four formats of the single hitting British stores, despite the abortion of a CD single. Along with the traditional 7" and 12", a cute 7" cut-away cover with inner sleeve, and a 12" picture disc were released. No real previously unavailable material appeared on these releases, since the live tracks were by now familiar from the "Grace Under Pressure Tour" video. The aborted CD single resurfaced in Germany, and while the cover has the U.K. catalogue number deleted, the actual disc does not and could almost be considered a U.K. release (cat. no. RUSHCD 14). Once more, the single dipped out of the charts just where it counts, at No. 42.

The "Hold Your Fire" tour opened in North America in November, and after a five-year break, the band returned to European stages in the spring of 1988. In preparation for the U.K. gigs, Old Gold Records slipped out a reissue of "Closer To The Heart" with "Spirit Of Radio" (a re-labelled version of the 1985 "Big Money" freebie?) to negligible interest. Meanwhile, Vertigo put out what was to be their last single from the band, "Prime Mover". Again, marketing was severe, with a 7" white vinyl edition and 3-D effect sleeve 12" complementing the usual 7", 12", and by now obligatory CD. The bonus material was again from the 1984 live video and predictably failed to convince British buyers to put Rush into the charts.

Despite a weaker response to the album and singles than usual, the British shows were the highlight of the entire tour, with NEC in Birmingham dates providing the band with a new live video and the bulk of a double live LP. Mixed in the summer with the band producing, "A Show Of Hands" was released in January 1989 with little promotion and no single releases.

## HIATUS

Having fulfilled a long-standing contract with Phonogram with the live LP, the trio took six months off and thought about calling it a day. After the half-year hiatus, however, they decided to carry on, signed a three-year LP deal with Atlantic and set about making "Presto" with Rupert Hine taking over the co-producer's chair. Simpler arrangements and a more direct approach led to an unprecedented early finish in the studio, and the album, reached record stores to a fairly lukewarm reception in November 1989. Success in the U.K. was definitely muted, but through Atlantic's careful promotion the album and corresponding U.S. tour earlier this year proved to be one of the most successful ever. No singles have yet been released in Britain, though the jazz-rock orientated "Show Don't Tell", already a single in America, has been touted as the most likely candidate. This appears to have been vindicated by its inclusion on "Chronicles", a triple LP, double cassette/CD compilation charting the group's recording history from 1974 onwards.

Whatever disappointment long-term admirers might feel at the lack of remixes or rare B-sides, there can certainly be no complaints at Rush's ever progressive musical output. And there are plenty of promo-only items available to the more committed collector, which we shall look at in more detail in a future issue. The band's following remains loyal to the trio, and while currently preparing to record their 14th studio LP, it is certain that Rush will continue to take high-tech rock music into the Nineties.

For details of "The Spirit Of Rush" fanzine, write with an SAE to 23 Garden Close, Chisbrook Rd., Grove Park, London SE12 9TG.

## Rush Discography Continued

### Vertigo RUSH D12

Vertigo RUSH 1212  
Vertigo RUSH 13  
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Vertigo RUSH 1312

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Vertigo RUSH 14  
Vertigo RUSH R14  
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### Vertigo RUSH CD14

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Mercury 9100 013  
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Mercury 9100 039  
Mercury 6672 015  
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