



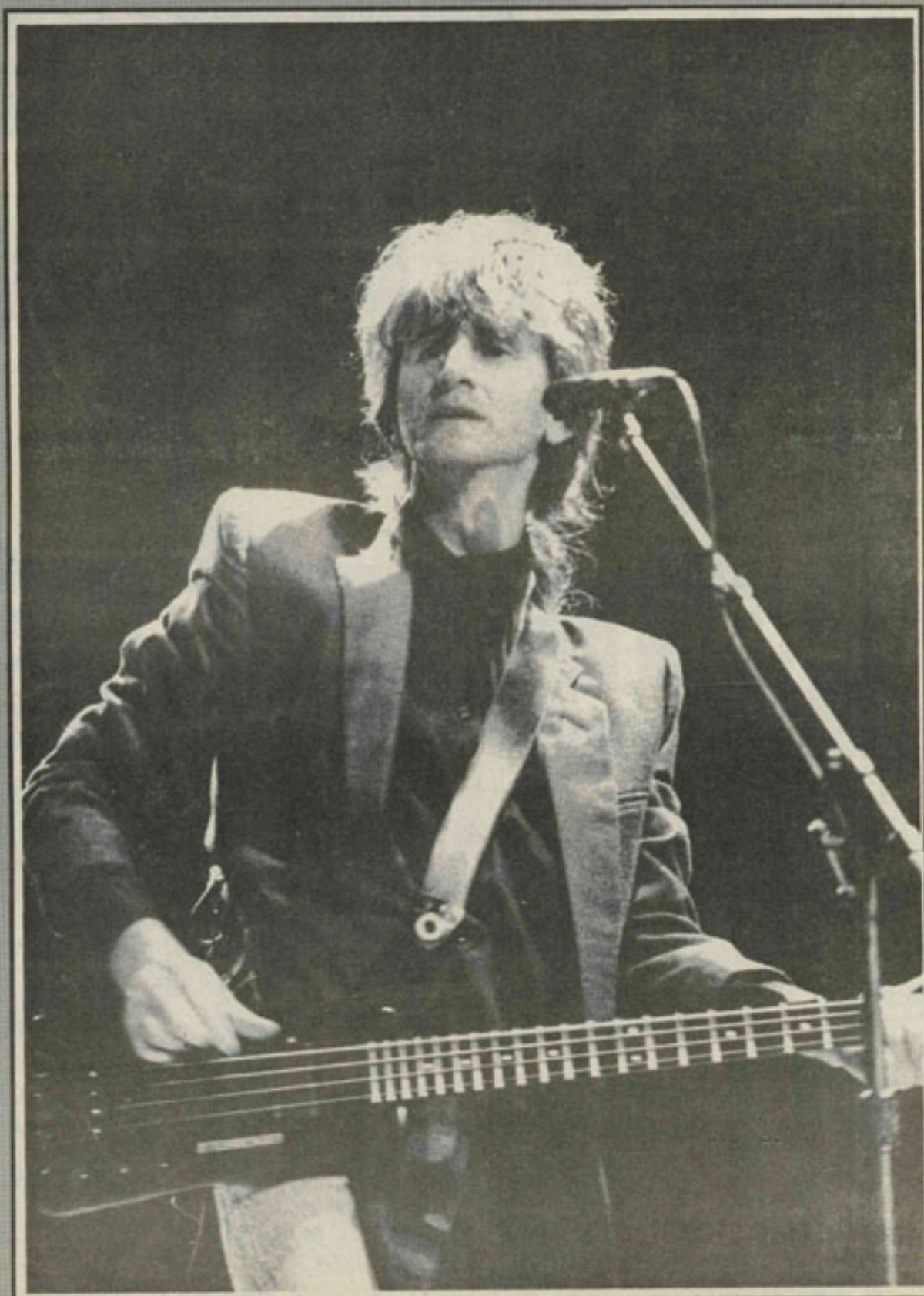
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RUSH

INSIDE:
NITZER EBB
PAM TILLIS
MARK
CHESNUTT
DALLAS CLUB
LISTINGS
CONCERT
CALENDAR
ALBUM
REVIEWS



GEDDY LEE

Rush 'rolls the bones' as they enter the 1990's

For the past two decades, Canada's finest musical export, Rush, has been on the cutting edge of rock and roll using technology and life itself as the catalysts to create the music and the sound that is unique only to this band. Indeed, Geddy Lee's voice is unmistakable. Indeed, Alex Lifeson's guitar work is unbelievable, and indeed, the lyrics of drummer Neil Peart are undeniable. Rush has been one of the few bright spots in the world of music the past two decades, along with Genesis and Yes, that's been able to take their ideas and adapt them to the musical environment around them without losing their individuality or identity that made them unique in the first place.

As Rush 'rolls the bones' for the next decade, the band has once again set new standards and redefined musical parameters to suit the unique musical balance that only Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart fully understand. The results, as usual, have been nothing short of phenomenal, and for the legion of fans that have stayed true to Canada's finest import, the results, as usual, were just what they expected.

By Leslie Thomas

Is Rush a smarter band because it has learned to control the elements around them instead of the other way around?

Geddy Lee - That's always a tough question to answer. I would say that we have immediate control of the elements around us. But once again, the moment you let a record out of your hands, it's out of your control to a large degree. Then you can only hope that you can exert some kind of influence. Whether that actually happens or not depends upon a lot of things. When Rush started out, you were a very heavy band. Were you a product of the environment around you?

I think that we always did what we wanted to do, and in that sense, almost every band is a product of its time in one way or another. The times were changing and so were we. The style of music that we had been working with, the very heart of it has always remained the same, but the influences on it and our goals as songwriters/musicians, have been changing. Our music is always in a fluid state and that explains the stylistic changes that have appeared over the last few years. Through the earlier stages, we were suburban kids that were trying to have our own sound. I think our music reflected the frustrations of that upbringing and as a result those early albums were very raw and had a desperate kind of an edge to it. Did the albums *Hemispheres* and *Farewell To Kings* set the stage for Rush to head into the '80s?

It was more than that. As we got more adept at using our instruments and more successful, our focus shifted slightly to other things. With us, the better we got with our instruments, the more adept we were to go through phases as musicians. When you know you can play really well, you want to show that, and I think that the challenges of being a technical band were very important to us during that *Hemispheres*, *Farewell To Kings* phase. That seemed to be the main priority to us. After that phase, I think that we got a lot of that out of our system and our needs were more in a sense of trying to be better songwriters, more concise songwriters, and trying to absorb and reflect the changes that were happening in rock music at the time. Records were being made quicker and there were more rhythmic influences that were obviously influenced and pressed into a of pop music that was affecting us to. So I think that we have always mirrored things around us to a degree, but some of those have been self-imposed things.

All *The Worlds A Stage* was the first of your three live albums correct?

Yes, that was the first one.

Did that album sum up the achievements of Rush, *Fly By Night*, *Gress of Steel* and *2112*, thus allowing you to close the chapter on that part of your musical history, and move forward from there?

I think with this band, for some reason, every three albums we seem to enter into a new era by ending the previous one with a live album.

It's interesting that Rush can sum up a period in their musical careers with a live album, and then go forward from their and musically evolve without losing their audience, and then repeat that cycle three or four albums down the road with the same results.

Yeah, it seems to work like that doesn't it? I don't know if that's a pre-determined thing or if it's coincidental, but it really is true. Maybe it was accidental at first and now we plan it in, but live albums do serve a lot of purposes for us, and because we keep going on as a band, it's a problem to deal with. Most bands don't last this long and they never have to deal with these situations. It's like, 'Oh, we're still here,' so obviously we can't go on stage and play 15 albums worth of material. Some have to stay and some have to go. You are always going to lose some songs forever, so we chronicle them on a live album so that way they'll be preserved for somebody's interest anyway. We come up with these situations most bands don't encounter because they don't last this long to deal with them.

When did Neil start taking a more active role in the songwriting process of Rush?

Well, when he first joined the band, we invited him into that process.

That's interesting because all of Rush's material in the beginning seemed to be long and complex music that concentrated on the technical aspect of the music rather than the lyrics itself.

You have to remember that before Neil joined the band, our lyrics were very last minute and always seemed to be a necessary evil. We were very much motivated by music ourselves, and not so much by the lyrics. That was the way we spoke by the way Alex and I put the music together and when Neil came into the band, he just joined



Alex Lifeson

Geddy Lee

that thing without knowing what it was. The more we got to know Neil, the more we realized that his input, No. 1 lyrically and eventually rhythmically and musically, were important. Alex and I have never had this belief of the two of us, it has always been a three-way thing and it was our suggestion to Neil that he become involved in the lyrics and it was something that he had never thought about before. And once he started doing it he grew to like it and realized that it could be an important expression for him.

The tune "Working Man," seemed to be a pivotal song for Rush throughout the '70s. Was it?

That's true, it became a very important song for us. I think the No. 1 reason "Working Man" became so popular was because of its aggressive musical style and what the song said in very simplistic way legitimized it in the eyes of the people.

Did Neil start taking a more active role in the songwriting with *Hemispheres* and *Farewell To Kings*?

It started really with *Fly By Night*. Neil started writing lyrics, and I think he wrote about 60 percent of the lyrics on that album. From that point on, he was involved in the songwriting process and he just got better and better at it. We went through very different phases of three-way input, but we all have specific things within the songwriting method that we do. We all have specialties that we lean towards, and out of that, the roles when it came to individual songs sort of become defined. Lyrics just happened to become Neil's role. Now I'm not saying that any of those roles are self-sufficient, we all have input with the music at all times, especially myself and Neil's lyrics because I have to sing them. There's a lot of dialogue going on back and forth on whatever we're doing at the time.

Has it been easy for you to focus in on the visions or observations that Neil makes with his lyrics?

Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it's not. When it's not, I have to determine in my own mind how comfortable I am with what he is trying to say and can I give him any input to say in lyrics what he is trying to say face to face. I think that is the most difficult thing about a lyricist because you write on your own. You're alone with your thoughts and you put it down on paper and you feel that this is what you are saying, but maybe it's not clear what you are saying, maybe it's hard to be objective to see that. Sometimes you need a mirror to look at, something to bounce your ideas off. The same things happen musically for Alex and myself, we need somebody to bounce off what we are doing every once in a while to see where we are, to see what we are doing. Sometimes you lose sight of what you're doing.

The music that's produced by Rush is like a dialogue between Neil and yourself, and when you two can't communicate musically, Alex comes into the picture to fill in the gaps. Is that a fair observation of the band and the way you work?

No, I don't think so. It doesn't work like that. Actually, Alex and I work hand in hand to put the music together and Neil will add his speciality, lyrical ideas, and the three of us sit down and hash out the problems that we have and try to make them all work. That's how Rush writes a song.

How difficult has it been for Rush to maintain that standard of musical excellence that the album, *Moving Pictures*, set for the band? And don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing the content or the integrity of your musical accomplishments before that.

No, I understand what you're saying. I think that when you talk about musical integrity, that thing either exists in you or it doesn't. That's present from day one. I don't think anybody thrusts you into that. But in terms of success and in terms of spotlight, *Moving Pic-*

tures was probably our highest point in terms of breaking down barriers, especially in breaking down barriers to accepting radio. From that album on, we had quite a different image on the radio level and since that album, radio has supported us to a large degree very well. I bet that was a strange feeling to adjust to?

It was, but it meant very little to the internal workings of the band. The day-to-day writing and thinking about what we are doing and how we are doing it — that's a long-term thing. From the beginning, we've always looked at our careers as a long-term thing. I guess the best way of putting it is this. We've always looked at our having a career and not trying to make just a couple of records which I think is a big difference between us and other bands. A lot of bands have individuals that have outside careers and the band is just something that they're in when it's convenient for them. We view Rush as being our career, and we take a very active part in it. Is that one reason it takes the band a long time to put out an album?

We have always been concerned with the long-term view. Because of the slow way we work and the patience we have, there was never a hurry in the band to have a big hit right away. We knew we'd have some records that would be more successful than others, but basically the goal was to try and make a lot of records, to try to keep working on what we are doing, and to keep learning about the different aspects of what we're doing to the point that we end up with a very long career.

This past decade the two bands I've admired the most have been Rush and Genesis for the very fact the two bands have kept their musical integrity intact despite radio's formats. You haven't conformed to your surroundings, the surroundings have conformed to you. Has it been that easy?

I don't think that it's ever easy, but the more success that you attain on doing things your own way, the easier it becomes. For some reason, people want proof that you know what you're doing. As soon as you give it to them then a lot of pressure goes off of you. I would say that we probably had more pressure put on us before *2112* than any point since then.

That seems rather odd that *2112* was a turning point for Rush?

After *2112*, we seemed to break down a lot of barriers. And when I say a lot of pressure, I mean pressure from within our own circles. I still don't think that people that we work with in terms of management and those immediately around us were convinced that, 'These guys know what they're doing.'

And *2112* unlocked the doors to the future?

2112 seemed to be the answer to that, and I think from that point on, even though there is always pressure, external pressures, I think that it solidified our immediate circle to the point where the people that we worked with closely believed we knew what we were doing. Now, whether we did or not I don't know, but the fact that they believed it made it easier for them to fight the secondary pressures from that point on.

Have you ever gotten the feeling at some point in the last 15 years that some people genuinely wanted Rush to fail?

Yes I have. Of course your fans don't want you to, but people love overnight success stories and they like slaying dragons, or 'I told you so's.' They like seeing people that have been successful for a long time all the sudden not be successful. I guess that it is just the pettiness that exists in those people.

Your last live LP, *A Show Of Hands*, sums up *Grace Under Pressure*, *Power Windows* and *Hold Your Fire*. I guess that meant that Rush was getting ready to usher in a new era?

continued on page 14

Lillian Axe
Poetic Justice
IRS/Grand Slam
By Leslie Thomas

This seems to be a season of change for Lillian Axe. First they find a new label. Secondly, it's out with some of the old and in with the new. The core of the band, guitarist Steve Blaze, vocalist Ron Taylor and rhythm guitarist Jon Ster, remained intact as two new members, drummer Gene Barnett (formerly of Dirty Looks) and bassist Darren DeLatte of Dallas took their respective positions. The new blood has been nothing short of electrifying.

The album's title, *Poetic Justice*, seems only too fitting in light of the band's short, but turbulent history in the recording business. But the past is exactly that, and move on Lillian Axe most certainly has. The chemistry and balance presented in the '90s version of Lillian Axe was felt from track one through track 11. It's almost unbelievable to think that this album was put together in the course of two weeks. Under the guidance of producer Leif Moses (Scorpions, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck), Lillian Axe finally created the right explosive combination in their music that's going to make people sit up and take notice, and take notice fast.

The first single off the record, "True Believer," has been receiving some heavy airplay throughout the area, but interestingly enough, that song doesn't even scratch the surface of the tunes Lillian Axe has dished up for the unsuspecting. "See You Someday," and "Promised Land," are but two of the juicy morsels the '90s edition of Lillian Axe has offered those hungry for rock and roll.

Guitarist Steve Blaze particularly shines on this album. His songwriting and guitar playing flow from song to song with the greatest of ease. His sense of styling and phrasing have grown immensely in the past two years, and it shows in the music. "Living In The Grey," deals with the tough subject of suicide. "Body Double," however, playfully alludes to a couple of naughty twins caught between the changing riffs of a guitar. And last, but not least, there's the souped-up rendition of the Badfinger classic, "No Matter What."

Yeah, it's been a long and winding road for Lillian Axe over the years. Most bands would have withered away and died had they been exposed to the bullshit this band has endured over the years. But then again, most bands aren't Lillian Axe. This band is living proof that there is 'poetic justice' in the world if you stay true to your music and believe in what you're doing. Are you listening MCA? You will be.

SISTER RED
Sister Red
Vision Records
By David Huff

Four years in the making, this Miami based duo of multi-talented guitarist/keyboardist/so-

ngwriter Anthony Winters and the sensual, breathtakingly beautiful vocalist Aimee, has reintroduced the classic influences of the late '60s and early to mid-'70s British sound, (notably Pink Floyd) into the more cerebral '90s with a flare and panache rarely seen in today's musical spectrum. It's even more remarkable when you realize this music is coming from the salsa and rap capital of America, Miami.

Brought together by death (Anthony and Aimee met at a funeral), their debut as Sister Red has breathed new life into a dying artform that has seen better days. Though they grew up musically in the rapped, rerapped and unrapped sound of South Florida that was further dominated by the Miami Sound Machines and prepackaged dance scenes, Sister Red has redefined musical parameters with their unique sound and style that may very well become the choice of a new generation. Aimee sums it up quite well when she warbles, "Rock and roll can't change the world, it's true/but what it can change is the tune in you."

Indeed, Sister Red's debut is heavily influenced by the sound and style of the Beatles and other British heavyweights of the '60s and '70s. It's also heavily influenced by Anthony Winters' admiration and in a sense, love, for Aimee herself. Songs like "Total Bliss," and "I Won't Fall," talk about never giving up and believing in one's self. And then there's the acoustic gem "I Miss You." Winters' confession of love to his soulmate through his guitar's voice and the written word is eloquently composed and beautifully spoken.

The two lighten up with "Tune In, Turn On," and "Darker Than The Sun," as they serve up cool grooves topped with a psychedelic twist. They even throw in their compelling version of the Ten Years After classic, "I'd Love To Change The World," for good measure. Sister Red completes the personal observance of life-in-general with the techno-pop thriller, "Mile High."

All in all, this album is a wonderfully composed letter from Anthony to Aimee disguised in the form of songs describing his thoughts and feeling not only about her, but life in general. Does this Romeo love Juliet? You bet. Only this time, the funeral they attend has a happy ending.

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY
Blind
Relativity Records
By Rob Core

For anyone who hasn't ever thought of giving a band like Corrosion Of Conformity a snowball's chance in hell of ever playing their music over a stereo system, listen up. You've got nothing to be afraid of. Your system won't experience a meltdown. Their new album, *Blind*, is not some hardcore experiment gone mad. It's a mind-altering experience gone bad, so bad that this C.O.C. sound is going to leave you gasping for more, and more, and more.

Blind is power. *Blind* is a groove. *Blind* is 13 songs of sheer intensity that gets your head banging and your feet stomping from "These Shroud-

ed Temples," to "Mine Are The Eyes Of God." C.O.C. brings out the metal edge with a sharpness so polished, it cuts right through the bull and into the sh--! If "Dance Of The Dead," does not get to you, the haunting sounds of "Shallow Ground," will. In the land of C.O.C., there are no such things as prisoners. Everyone is a slave.

Blind introduces to the C.O.C. faithful a new member of the crew, guitarist Pepper Keenan. Keenan not only tears his way through some gut-wrenching guitar parts but also provides the vocalson the album's highlight cut, "Vote With A Bullet."

Overall, *Blind* is an incomparable raw fare for the absolute domination of our society. This album is a must for anyone who isn't afraid to get a little dirt under their nails or a little grit in their teeth. After all, mixing a little C.O.C. with some high db's never hurt anyone — yet!

Lita Ford
Dangerous Curves
RCA Records
By Chris Silver

Dangerous Curves is right. Ever since this blonde bombshell shed her W.A.S.P. skin, she's been driving the airwaves crazy. And that, right there, has puzzled many of her longtime fans. Lita Ford is not a pop star. She never has been and she never will be, no matter what producer puts those thoughts in her head. After listening to the first two cuts, "Larger Than Life," and "What Do Ya Know," I kept asking myself, "Lita, what in the hell are you doing to your music? What are you doing to your fans?" This music was desperately lacking any passion or creativity and one has to wonder if Lita really cared. Did her previous producer, Mike Chapman, screw her up that much trying to make her radio friendly? Did her Top Ten hit with Ozzy warp her musical drive to the point she felt she had to be a pop diva? Was it necessary for her to drown her sound among an array of heavily laden hooks that had no rhyme or reason. There had to be an answer.

And there was, sort of. It came with a "Shot Of Poison." This cut, which subsequently became the lead single off *Dangerous Curves*, was a bit slower paced but it highlighted Lita's bolder vocals and passionate phrasing. Unfortunately, this is also the type of song that has been her claim to fame pushing on the Top 40 charts. It's also been her downfall. Lita should rock, not pop, like she did with "Hellbound Train." This song highlighted some of Lita's best fretwork and riffs that really rocked the tune. But alas, the tide turned. "Black Widow," added a totally different twist to the album with its variety of unusual guitar effects and synths.

Yeah, there were a lot of twists to Lita's *Dangerous Curves*, and don't get me wrong, the album does have some promise, but oh, how I long for the days of *Dancin' On The Edge*. That was how rock was meant to rock. To hell with the curves, just give it to us straight.

Rush Rolls The Bones To Come Up With A Winner

continued from page 6

It's part of our secret agenda. I don't know. It accomplishes a lot for us at that moment. It bought us some time to figure out what we needed to do. When you've been a rock band for 15-20 years, it's really hard to get enough time away from it that you can actually try to regain some sense of perspective on your life. I think that's very important to us at the moment and also, like I said, we have a lot of records and songs that disappeared from our shows and it was time to put some of those on vinyl so that we can update our live presentation. Really, your live albums come to represent your performance history in a way. So, every once in awhile we need to update that. We have changed over the last five albums, and *A Show Of Hands*, summed that up.

Throughout the 70's, "Working Man," to me was the anthem of Rush. In the 80's, it was "Closer To The Heart." That song is over ten years old now, and it seemed curiously out of place with the other songs on that live album you released.

It seems to be a song to us that never really gets old. There seems to be a sentiment in that song I think. It's always fresh and bears repeating and at the same time, it's a song that structurally has always remained a bit fluid and one of the few moments where we allow ourselves some improvisational time on the stage. So it's important for that reason to our show, and I think as a result of it, people always respond very strongly to that song, regardless of what shape it takes. So, for all those reasons, we felt it was important to have it on record. Do you understand people who say they have grown up with Rush over the years?

Well, I know for myself, when I was a fan, bands that I liked I felt very close to them. You are very loyal to what you consider to be your teachers, and the bands that I loved and the musicians that I respected were teachers to me. Some of them could do no wrong. I think think that you go through that period of admiration until they start doing something wrong to you, and they dare to break out and become something different than you want them to be. That is always a little disappointing from a band's point of view. You are loyal to them for a particular reason and now they are suddenly saying, "Well, I'm changing, sorry, I've got to go." That's tough for a fan to deal with and you feel betrayed, even though you haven't been. People grow so nothing remains the same. That's what nostalgia is all about. They can't break away from that period of their life and they keep on rehashing it and rehashing it. I don't know if that answered your question?

Well, when you, Alex and Neil started playing together and making music, where you all like students learning a craft?

When you are a student, I don't think that you look at yourself as a student. When you are in the public eye, you'd like to think that you have mastered enough to warrant being there in the first place. But, in a sense, you are always a student, and I think that we are still students now. But we have this experience behind us.

Was the advent of musical technology a blessing in disguise for Rush?

We happened to be around during that age of technological wonder really and its application to music, and yes, we have benefitted from it to a large degree. I also think that it has tied our hands together because being the kind of technocrats we can be, we've been raised on these things so much, you can paint yourself into a corner sometimes if you're tied to every imaginable machine possible up on a stage. You use these tools, but in a sense, they use you too. I think that you have to always wrestle with that question as to who's leading who.

Why did you have 'til Tuesday's Aimee Mann on *Hold Your Fire*? Wasn't that the first time you'd ever used an outside voice on a Rush song?

It wasn't the first time that we had ever used an outside musician, it was the first time that we had ever used an outside voice. Had Rush's previous album experience using other musicians make any difference to broadening the band's musical outlook?

Yes, it had opened up possibilities to us we'd never thought about before. We used Andy Richards on keyboards that past two studio albums, and we even had string arrangements on *Power Windows*. Working with other musicians showed us that we had been live a bit too insular within our group and that working with other people was exciting. It added things to our music we didn't realize could happen. So when it came time for that song, there was a part in it that seemed very obvious that it needed another voice and we decided it would be nice for it to be a feminine voice and we looked for the right voice. In Aimee, I think we found the right one.

Tillis casts light on long shadow

continued from page 12

Yes I did. I think everybody goes through that type of growing up. Didn't you? I didn't have a famous father so people didn't scrutinize my every move like they did you?

Everyone has a rebellious streak in them that usually comes out in their teen's and their twenty's. If they don't do it then, they wait until they're 40.

How many songs did you write on your Arista debut?

I co-wrote seven of them. My husband wrote several things with me and other close friends contributed to the album. Your husband's last project, Billy Hill, didn't work out for various reasons. Does your success in any way help lessen the blow he felt because of the circumstances surrounding that project?

I'm sure to an extent it does. Bob is an incredible songwriter on his own and has had a very successful career as a songwriter. He's written five No. 1 records and he's about to have his sixth. He's got a whole wall full of gold and platinum records.

Country music the past ten years has gone through some interesting cycles that offended some of the older establishment but delighted the younger generation. Have those cycles affected you as a songwriter any?

Some artists ignore those things, but I can't say that I ignore them because no one creates in a vacuum. You can't let yourself be affected by trends because what's hip today is often out of style tomorrow. The classics in country music are classics because they are lov-

ed. People find comfort in things that don't change, and that's why I think you found this resurgence in traditional country the past couple of years.

Change isn't something people in country music are used to is it?

Let me say this. People often rebel against music being new today, new tomorrow and new the next day after that. People want something familiar, like going home. That's what's great about country music. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to put on airs and be up-to-the-minute. On the other hand, there is also this internal tension within country music between it going forward and leaving the past behind. Any artform that doesn't go forward dies. Country music is constantly being fed new elements by this generation of people that grew up on rock and roll.

Each succeeding generation is influenced by the music that is dominating the times. Though country music was in your household, I don't see you as having grown up being influenced by it.

And I wasn't. My favorite band in high school was Led Zeppelin. It's that type of influence, though not direct, that we're going to bring to the table. Our's is not the real experience of the last country artist's generation. My dad worked in the fields, honest to God he did, and he knew what that was about and that was his country music. Our country music is different. Again, there's always going to be tension between generations of country performers. I like to think that my music is anchored in country tradition, but when we perform it on stage, we rock it up a little bit.