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HE'S A LONG-DISTANCE runner. He's a gentle family man. He uses the word *fabulous* as a descriptive tool. He is Geddy Lee. Who knew?

Rush's singer is notoriously private, which fuels the slightly frightening zeal of his disciples. But he is less so these days. Rush have been around since 1969, and a host of bands has been under their sway — Metallica, Nine Inch Nails, Soundgarden, Silverchair and Primus among them. Rush have just

released *Test for Echo*, their 16th studio LP, which continues a scale-back on keyboards. During recording, the fellas were buoyed by inspirational slogans, which they posted on the studio walls. One of them was, INDIVIDUALLY, WE ARE A ASS; BUT TOGETHER, WE ARE A GENIUS. Right!

You took a year and a half off before this album — an eternity for you.

Well, in 1994 my wife became pregnant. And I really wanted to be around when the baby was born and to spend more time with my older son. After a year I was getting the itch to write again, but Neil [Peart] was in the process of reinventing his drumming style. He'd been going to this teacher who tore apart his style, inside out. So Neil said, "I need six months before I can play like this on a record."

Was the coach at all daunted by teaching Neil?

I don't know the gentleman, aside from that it's common for a lot of well-known drummers to go to him. Often it's a conceptual thing. I think Neil said he only played in front of this guy a couple of times.

How does being a father change your outlook on life?

My priorities fall in a totally different way. Like, today's a day off for me; I should be on the road doing day-off things. Neil is at this moment motorcycling through Michigan. [Guitarist] Alex [Lifeson] is probably on a golf course. I'm in my daughter's room, playing dress-up with her. She's at the *Winnie the Pooh* stage.

I cannot picture you watching *Winnie the Pooh*.

Oh, it's great. I know all the songs. It subconsciously influenced this record to a great degree.

You have a song called "Virtuality," about life on the Internet. Do you surf it?

Well, I play rotisserie-league baseball on it. Tell me about the first Rush gig ever. With Neil Peart? 1974. Aug. 16. Pittsburgh Civic Arena. We were the opening act for Uriah Heep. And Manfred Mann's Earth Band was the special guest. We were given 24 minutes, exactly, to play. It was over very quickly.

Did you kick ass?

Well, most of the people were still shuffling to their seats.

What did you think of the new Rush tribute album?

I haven't heard it, to be frank.

But it's been out for months!



## GEDDY LEE

OF RUSH

By Jancee Dunn

It's embarrassing. This tribute stuff.

Which tribute bands are you aware of?

I know there are a bunch. I heard that one claims on their ad that they sound more like Rush than Rush. [Laughs]

Do you ever get mistaken for other stars?

I do, strangely enough. [Silence]

Example, please.

I get mistaken for John Lennon. I do. It's weird. Because I have little round glasses. And once in a while for... Bono.

Do any bands carry the Rush torch?

Perhaps Primus. There's a weirdness there that I detect was maybe partly inspired by the weirdness of our music.

What's a misconception about Rush?

That we're deadly serious folk, floating

around on some self-righteous cloud.

What is it with your rabid fans?

We always try to take the attitude that our fans are intelligent; therefore we try to progress, experiment. Some of them tolerate it, some of them don't.

Do you communicate with fans?

Very rarely.

Where are the female fans, for crying out loud?

Surprisingly, the last couple of tours, there has been a noticeable increase in the female population.

What's up with your live album?

We have stuff from 1979 in the can, stuff from the last tour, and we're going to record on this tour. I'd be hopeful if it came out before next Christmas.

A nonmusical goal, please.

I just started running, and one of my goals is to start entering a few small races and get a decent time. I'm fairly athletic. Tennis, I'm pretty fanatical about it.

What are you listening to these days?

I love the Tragically Hip. And there's an artist from Toronto named Hayden that I like a lot. I like Tricky and Massive Attack. Björk. I like this record by Tripping Daisy.

Do you enjoy your old albums at this point?

I only listen when I'm preparing to tour. Then I start getting nostalgic. It's like a combination of looking at a picture of yourself from 15 years ago and reading material you'd written at that time; you're embarrassed by some aspect and impressed by another. Then you're going, "Oh, my God, look at those glasses I was wearing."

Why no opening act on this tour?

When you have 16 studio records out, we decided the only way we could do it is be so self-indulgent that we have the whole show to ourselves. We do about two hours and 45 minutes of music.

What do you spare no expense on?

Exotic travel. To me that is the whole purpose of having a bit of extra cash. One year we went on safari to East Africa with my son, and it was just fabulous. It began a yearly thing — India, Nepal.

What's been the biggest rock-star moment in your career?

Whoo. That's a toughie. [Brightens]

Well, let's face it:

Every time you get a police escort, you gotta feel a little rock-starish.

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