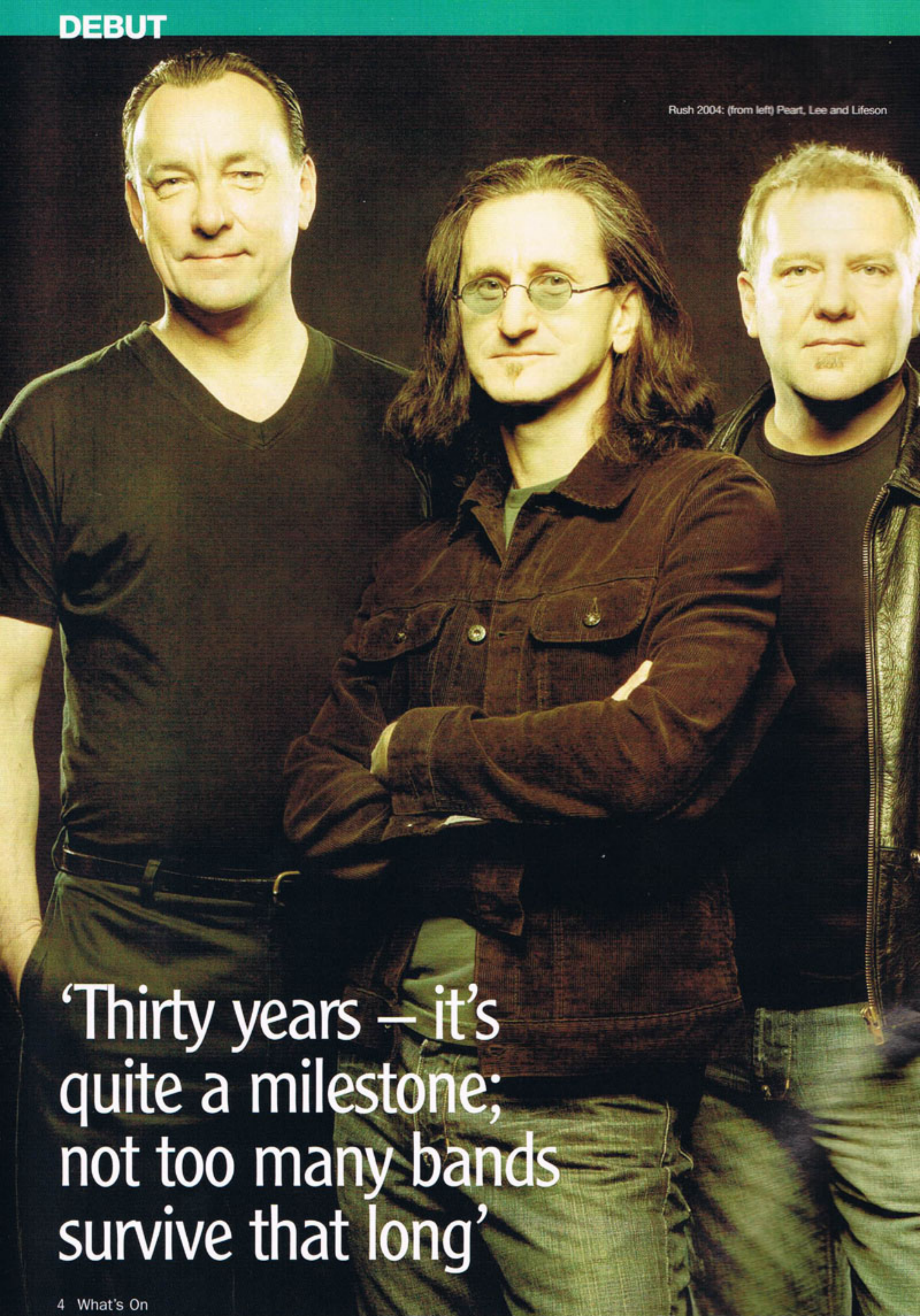


Rush 2004: (from left) Peart, Lee and Lifeson



‘Thirty years — it’s quite a milestone; not too many bands survive that long’



# Rush hour

Celebrating 30 years in the biz, Alex Lifeson talks to Jon Perks

AS THEY PREPARE to play two packed-out nights at the NEC and celebrate their 30th anniversary, Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson admits it's a tour that could so easily have not happened.

Some 12 years since they last played these shores on their Roll The Bones tour, the band of three – Lifeson, Geddy Lee and Neil Peart, began to question just how many of their British fans were still waiting for them.

"Having not been there for so long there was a question in our minds whether we really had much of a following, and it came as quite a shock to us to see the kind of response to these gigs in ticket sales," says Alex, 51. "Honestly, it really caught us off guard."

The UK tour is peppered with sell-out dates, but seven years ago fans questioned whether their Canadian heroes might ever record, let alone tour together again.

In the space of 10 months, drummer Neil Peart lost both his 19-year-old daughter Selena (in a car accident) and wife Jackie (to cancer), causing the band to take a compassionate sabbatical, Neil heading off for 14 months touring the Americas on his motorbike

## The What's On interview Alex Lifeson

while he came to terms with his tragic loss.

He and his two friends did reunite, however, the resulting Vapor Trails album and tour proving another emotional milestone in the career of one of rock music's most enduring and unique bands: "Probably one of the most emotional moments that we've ever had was at the first show on the Vapor Trails tour," Alex recalls. "We'd been off the road for five years and gone through the terrible tragedy that happened to Neil and that first gig in Hartford (Connecticut) there was a point where we all huddled by Neil's drumkit and we were just looking at each other and couldn't believe that we were back at it and we had another chance – it was really very, very emotional, I had a lump in my throat so many times that night, and looking out in the audience, people were just so full of joy and some fans were crying, it was really powerful."

There will doubtless be a few tears of emotion when Rush take to the Birmingham stage next

month; never the trendiest of bands, Rush have over their 30-year career built up an impressive back catalogue of albums that includes the classic 2112, Hemispheres, Hold Your Fire, Moving Pictures and Presto – and a loyal if low profile legion of fans.

"Thirty years – it's quite a milestone; not too many bands survive that long," agrees Alex. "It actually feels more like 50!!"

"We're all very close friends we love each other, we laugh a lot together and most importantly we enjoy working together as well," says Lifeson.

"We inspire each other, we push each other to do our best always."

"We certainly have our ups and downs like any band – touring we make as best we can, but it is difficult being away from family and friends and from a normal routine life – especially for 30 years."

Keeping fit (Lifeson practises yoga, plays golf off a handicap of 13, he and Lee play tennis regularly) and well-fed (as

well as their on-tour organic chef Lee and Lifeson are both accomplished gourmards) are essential elements to Rush on the road – the anniversary live show a three hour 20 minute marathon that would test the endurance of musicians half their age.

And despite hitting the big 5-0, there's no sign of any new recruits being drafted in to help out.

Three decades on from their eponymous debut album and three is still the magic number – Peart, Lee and Lifeson resisting the temptation to enrol other members: "We're happier this way," says Alex. "We always kind of talk about it; before the last tour Geddy really wanted us to seriously consider getting someone in to take on some of the keyboard duties so he was a little freer to move around, have some fun."

"We just kept ignoring him until he stopped bringing it up, and then of course it was too late in the end!"

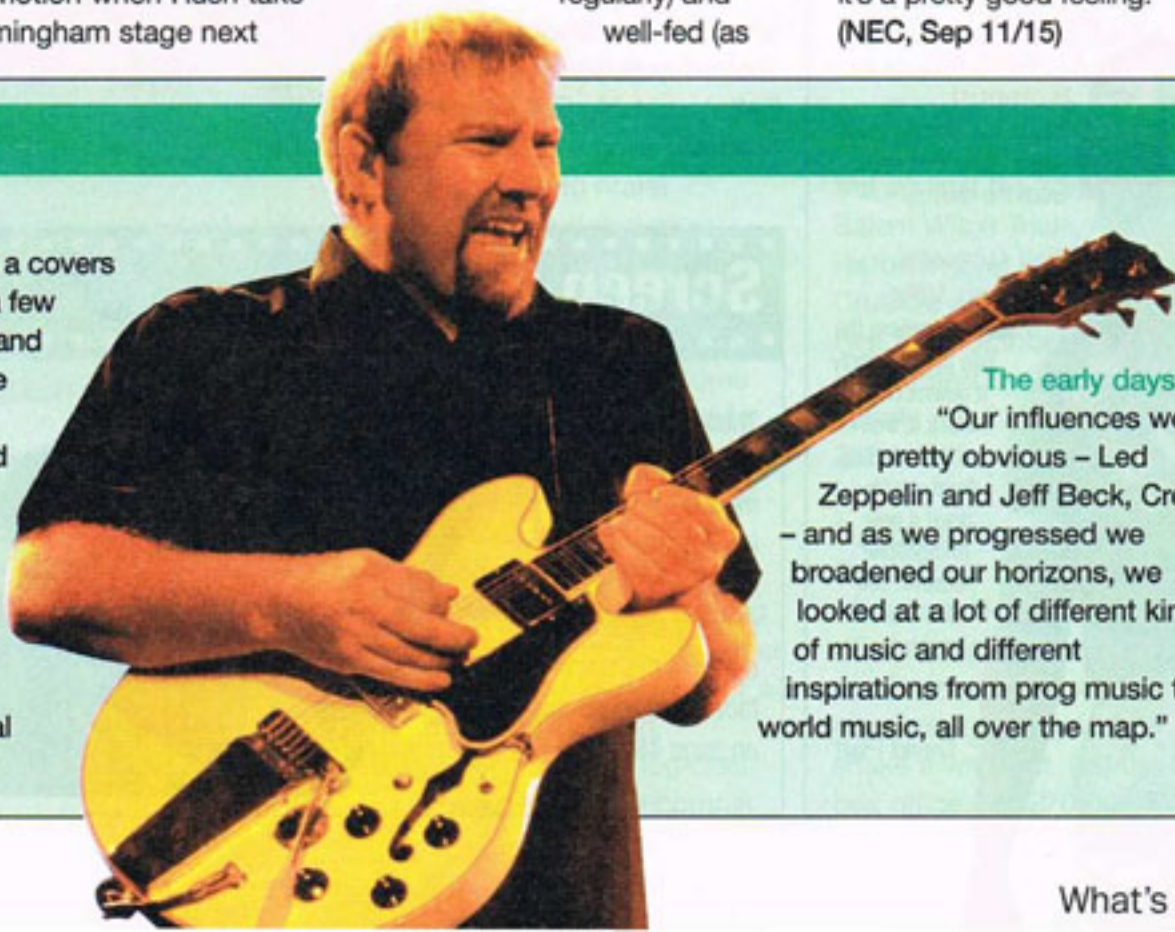
"It's a greater contest for us to get up there and do all the stuff that we do – and when your fans come back and say they can't believe how amazing it sounded, it's a pretty good feeling." (NEC, Sep 11/15)

## Alex on...

### The new album, Feedback...

"A friend of ours suggested the idea to us to do a covers album and we originally thought we'd just do a few songs for the website; that grew to five songs and once we got into the studio we added a couple more and ended up with eight songs – we probably could have done 13 or 14 had we had the time but we were preparing for the tour."

"Summertime Blues we really thought we could have some fun with that; we'd played all these songs with the exception of The Seeker at one point in this band in the earlier days, so to go back and revisit them and rearrange them to give our flavour it was a real fun thing."



### The early days...

"Our influences were pretty obvious – Led Zeppelin and Jeff Beck, Cream – and as we progressed we broadened our horizons, we looked at a lot of different kinds of music and different inspirations from prog music to world music, all over the map."