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"People are less afraid to show they're Rush fans these days": Neil, Geddy and Alex gear up for their next steampunk epic.

Back To The Future

Words: Philip Wilding

As 2012 begins, Rush are doing something that Geddy Lee likes to call "the death of hope"; that is mixing their latest album, *Clockwork Angels*. Scheduled for an early summer release, it's the band's 19th record and their first for the Roadrunner label.

"There was something about the people at Roadrunner, they were so into rock, into what we're all about as opposed to some of the Atlantic guys," says Geddy Lee from his home in Toronto.

"Frankly, we were very unhappy with the way we were treated at Atlantic UK, I don't think they really got us, so it was good to go somewhere that did."

The fruits of those labours will see the light of day as loose concept album that takes its cue from Philip K Dick as much as it does Jules Verne; a steampunk epic set in a future dressed in Victorian drapes. Those who attended the band's shows on the phenomenally successful *Time Machine* tour will have already heard two songs from the new record; *Caravan* and *BU2B* and experienced at least part of the stage show that will be in full effect for the *Clockwork Angels* tour.

"It's a futuristic point of view that's rooted in the past, which makes it so interesting. You look at the steampunk designs and they all look like Victorian designs but fast-forwarded in some magical way to the future. It really appealed to us to build a story around that world. Yeah, a lot of the visuals will be similar what they were on the *Time Machine* tour because it was really designed for *Clockwork Angels*, but we just jumped the gun a bit and got too excited and couldn't hold it back, but we will

reflect some more of those changes."

While the album's title track is, according to guitar Alex Lifeson, "very dynamic" and a "multi-parted piece" (sounds like prog rock to us), Lee will only concede, "it's a longer piece, we're pushing all the songs as long as we can."

And while nothing's set in stone, whispers of European festival shows abound (something Lee admitted the band was open to when he attended a live Q&A for a screening of the band's *Beyond The Lighted Stage* documentary in London) and for his part, Lee's eager to get back out there and play.

"The last tour was so great, the show was really fun to play, the crowds were amazing, every night we would just look out and be; wow, there's a lot of them out there, I can't wait to experience that again. People seem a little less afraid to show that they're Rush fans. I think we all enjoyed it, I don't think I've ever seen Neil enjoy a tour so much, it was done in a great spirit. I think we're all as energised as we ever have been, we love working together, we're totally excited about this new record."

And with the promise of a new tour comes the promise of new films to introduce the band - past clips have included cameos by Ben Stiller and the two leads from *I Love You, Man*.

"We're definitely going to make some more films, absolutely," Geddy says happily, "though it'll be hard to compete with Alex's mullet and that 'moving pitchers' gag." 🍷

Clockwork Angels is out in May via Roadrunner. For more info see www.rush.com.