

Rush aims to portray real world

By James Simon

Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Rock n' roll tunes that stress individualism and personal freedom sound quaint, almost outdated, compared to the "life in the fast lane" and "party hearty" attitude that most bands epitomize.

But Neil Peart, songwriter and drummer for Rush, says the Canadian group's tunes simply reflect the upbringing the musicians received while living outside of Toronto.

"People call it libertarianism and individualism, but it's really just my father's old work ethic," Peart says. "I've read people like Ayn Rand, 'The Fountainhead' and 'Atlas Shrugged' and all that — but it all boils down to a simple theme: If you're going to do it, do it right."

The themes that run through such songs as "New World Man" and "Subdivisions" on the latest Rush album have helped propel the band to superstar status throughout the United States after 10 years of touring.

The Northeast was "the last nut to crack," Peart said, but the group headlined sold-out shows at the Boston Garden, Worcester Centrum and several other large halls on its latest tour to complete their musical conquest of the country.

Rush's popularity began to mushroom, about five years ago, Peart said, when the band hit an artistic dead end — both musically and lyrically.

"We reached a point where we could go no further with the basic guitar-bass-drums lineup," Peart recalled. So bassist Geddy Lee took on keyboard duties as well, adding "spacey synthesizer effects to the band's basic power trio sound that helped propel such FM radio favorites as "Lamelight" and "Tom Sawyer."

Peart, who joined Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson for the band's second album, said his writing also began to mature from the simple science fiction themes that dominated early tunes.

"I was into the concept of big ideas, using fantasy and science fiction themes as a vehicle to convey broad concepts of life," he said. "Now, I want to portray the real world and how it affects real people."

That approach resulted in such songs as "Subdivisions," which chronicles what Peart feels is the "boring, predictable and confining" world that most teen-agers face.

While the tune urges listeners to avoid the suburban trap — go beyond the high school halls and shopping malls — the clever arrangement focuses attention on the music and avoids any preachy moralism.

Rush's tunes reflect group's upbringing

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