

level of exposure. From a creative standpoint, Pink Floyd was never able to equal *Dark Side Of The Moon*, but commercial success continued with further conceptual works like 1979's *The Wall*, with its hit single, "Another Brick In The Wall."

Kansas was something of an American alternative to the British dominated progressive music scene when they appeared in the late Seventies. Much more metal oriented than the earlier progressive bands, Kansas could justifiably be considered a bridge between progressive rock and what can now be categorized as progressive metal. On albums such as *The Point Of Know Return*, and *Leftoverture*, Kansas even established itself as a commercial entity, something that despite the far reaching implications of the progressive period as a whole, could be said for few of the individual bands. Kansas even had a Top 40 hit with "Dust In The Wind." Some of the band's commercial cunning can be attributed to producer Don Kirshner, the man behind both the Monkees and the Archies but this should not (necessarily) be taken as an indictment of the band's music.

Even more important in the development of today's progressive metal is Rush, a band which did even more to inspire the speed-metal genre than its name would naturally indicate. Unlike the other progressive rock bands covered here, Rush always was a heavy metal band, if one that was more technically inclined. Appearing rather late in the game, Rush has never been a critical favorite but fans that find Van Halen and AC/DC a little too simplistic have made Rush a favorite party soundtrack. Before Metallica appeared on the scene to inspire a wave of similarly inclined musicians, Rush was the only band worthy of the label "techno-metal."

Rush is the kind of band you either love or hate. Formed in 1973 in Toronto by guitarist Alex Lifeson, vocalist/bassist Geddy Lee, and original drummer John Rutsey (replaced a year later by Neil Peart). Rush were the first to combine a heavy metal sound with a science fiction outlook. The band established a distinctive style based around Lee's high-pitched vocals and the band's frantic ensemble playing.

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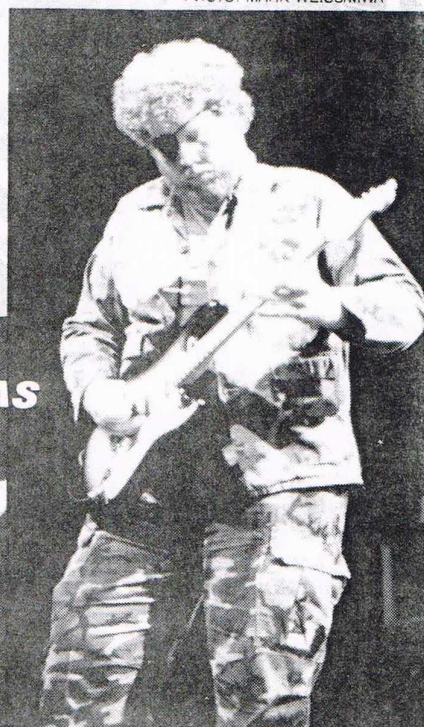
RUSH



PHOTO: EDDIE MALLUK

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KANSAS



PHOTO: MARTY TEMME



QUEENSRYPHE



PHOTO: GEORGE DESOTA



KING'S X

PHOTO: MARK WEISSMAN

Their conceptual approach to songwriting, as demonstrated by records like *A Farewell To Kings* (released in 1977) and *Signals* (1982), was a major influence on Queensryche's *Operation: Mindcrime* and Voivod's *Nothingface*. Perhaps because Rush exists in a time that lacks an appreciation for the theatrical trappings that characterized its progressive predecessors, the band has declined to bring these concepts to life on the stage, preferring to highlight their virtuoso musicianship. Rush has a very good reputation for being able to pull off their music live, which has resulted in not one, but two live albums: *All The World's A Stage* and *Exit: Stage Left*.

Imagine Rush fronted by Peter Gabriel and you'll have a fairly accurate picture of Queensryche—or even a more grown-up version of Iron Maiden. This band, based in the Pacific Northwest, almost single-handedly initiated the move to progressive metal when it first arrived on the music scene. Queensryche made an incredibly brave attempt at advancing the state of heavy metal through the 1984-like storyline of *Operation: Mindcrime*, and the adventurous music which accompanies it. *Mindcrime* propelled the band beyond its regional status, establishing them as a national and international act. Queensryche's music had always contained themes, but never as ambitious as those which were successfully realized on this album.

With new instrumentation, including the synthesizer (an instrument that has rarely worked in a heavy metal context), the progressive metal bands are advancing the state of metal.

Since they come from Texas, a place not normally associated with heavy metal, let alone progressive rock, King's X were especially courageous when they combined the two on their debut release, *Out Of The Silent Planet*. The band is probably used to defending itself. Though many were confused by King's X when the band first appeared, they can now be seen, along with Queensryche, as starting the progressive renaissance. Many of the bands of the progressive period, such as Yes and Genesis, had cosmic overtones, and King's X is no exception. Main writer Jerry Gaskill