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Vol 13 #6

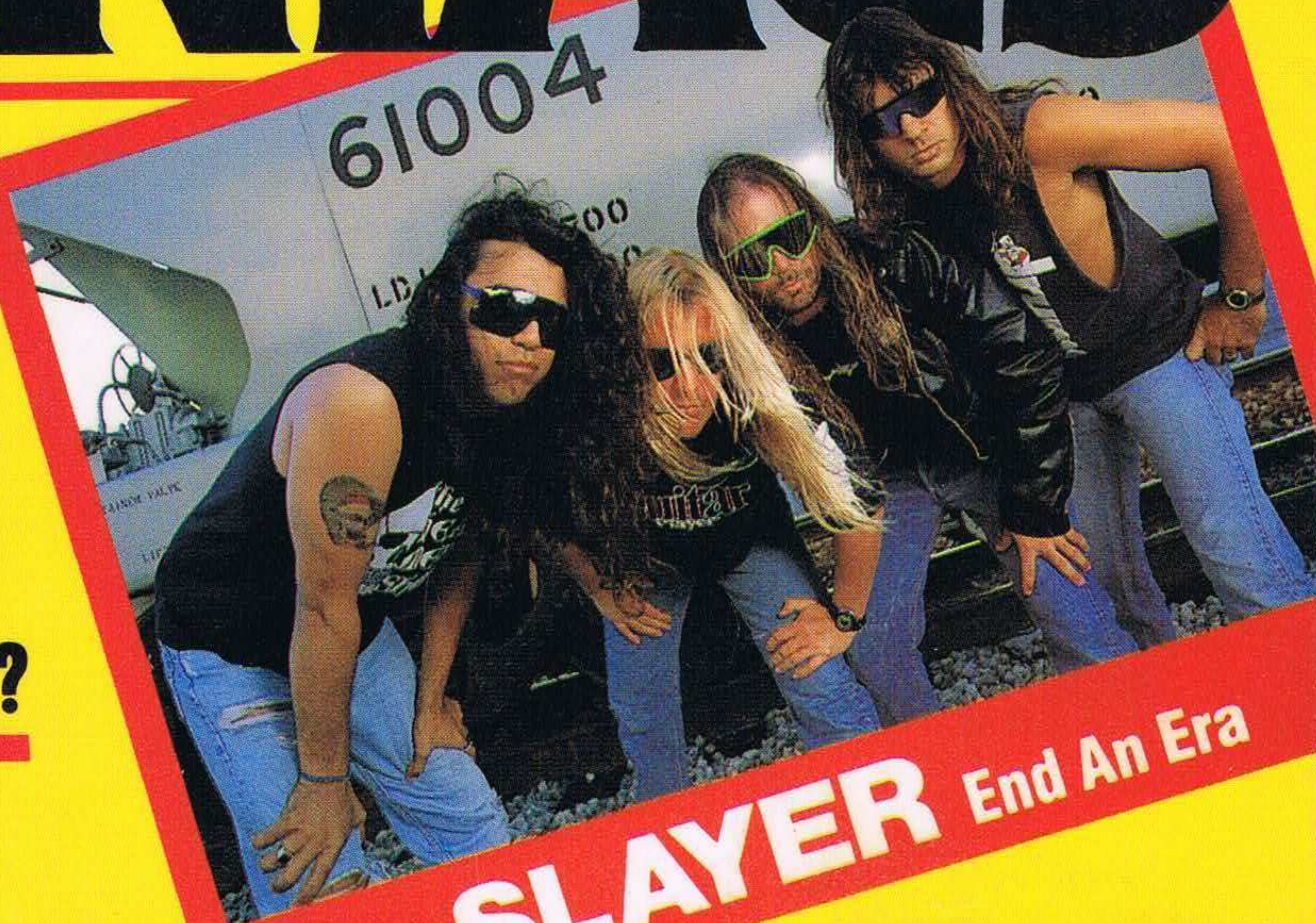
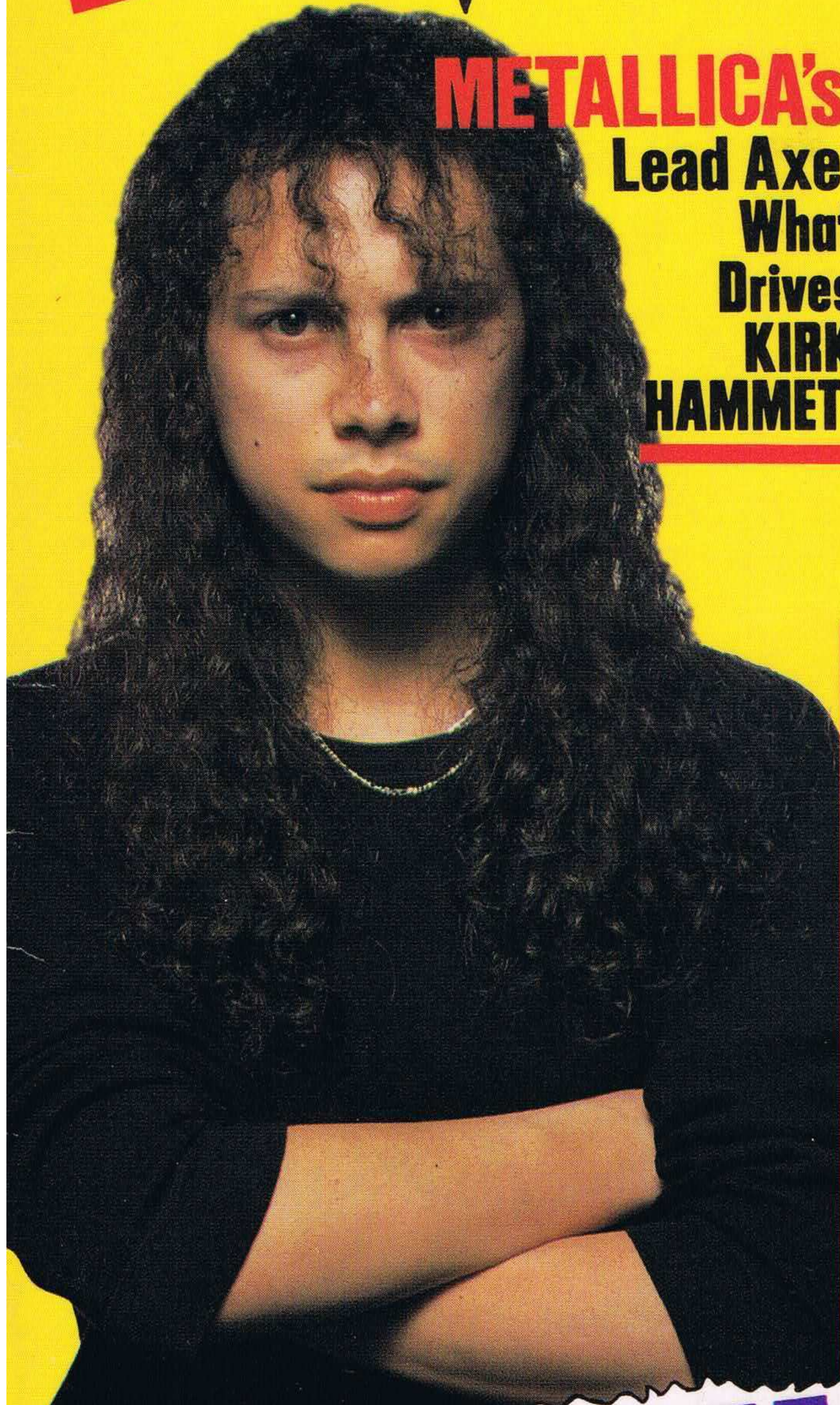
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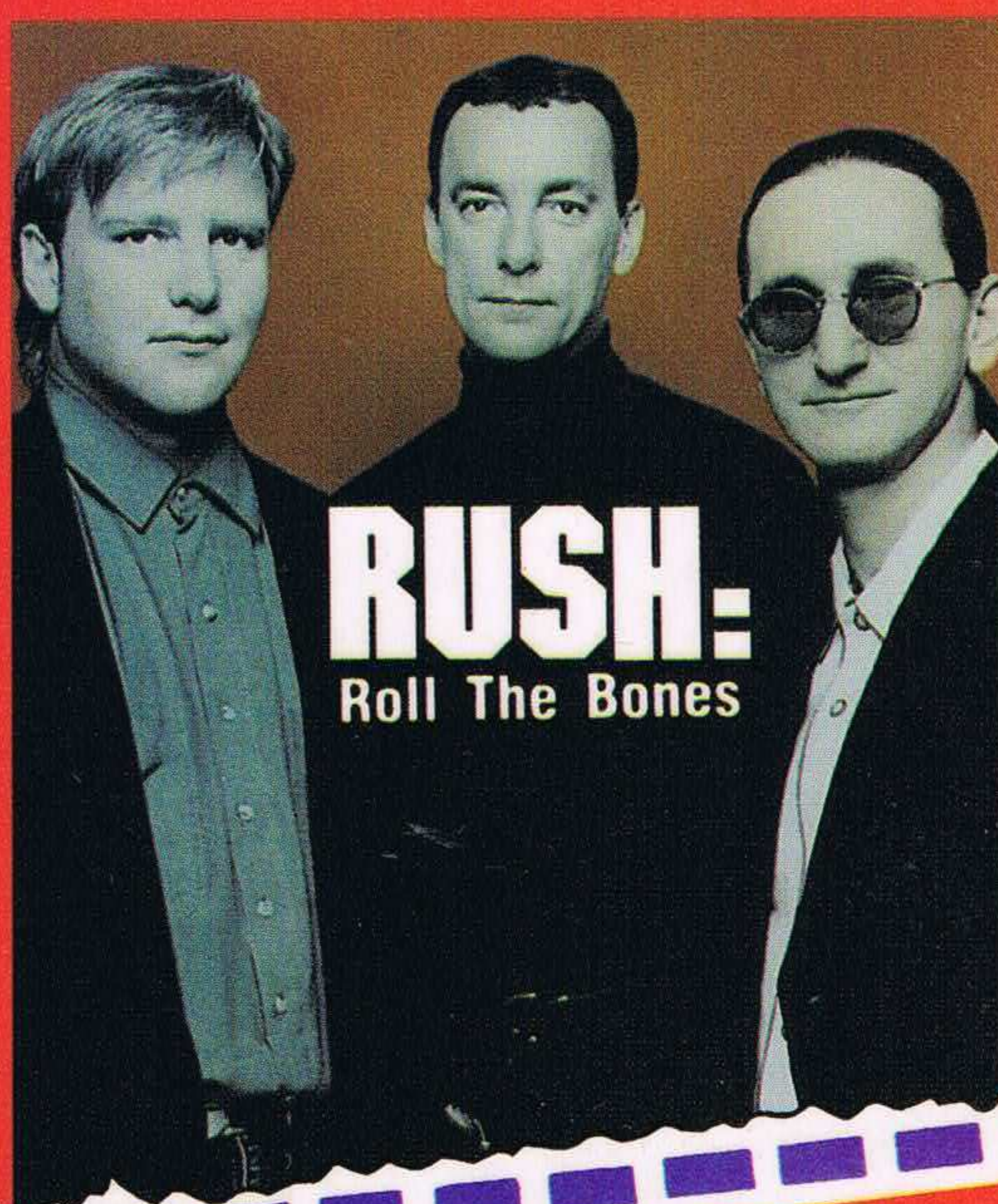
MANIACS

METALLICA'S

Lead Axe:
What
Drives
**KIRK
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SLAYER End An Era



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On Location With **PESTILENCE &
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RUSH

Even if you've given up on Rush after *Moving Pictures*, you've still got to admire their mastery and near-perfection of the musical craft, their integrity, their longevity (seventeen years!), and their buoyant, jesting good nature—in particular, that of ultra demi-god Geddy Lee:

Metal Maniacs: What are your thoughts about your musical transition from a more heavy, distortion guitar style to the lush arrangements you have now?

Geddy Lee: It's been an evolution; kind of a gradual thing, and I think still within that evolution we've gone back and forth, and every once in a while we purposely regress, just to bring a bit of that edge back

in. 'Cause I think that's something we don't ever want to really lose, but I think we look at it as something else in kind of our arsenal of textures, as opposed to just the main thrust of the sound. We're always interested in having a high energy basis for a lot of our music, but from time to time we really enjoy being able to exercise restraint and get into the more ethereal, textural side of our writing ability.

Is the energy inclusive approach for live purposes?

I don't think we really consider that, not when we're making an album. We just start writing and see what comes out. Before we started this album we talked a little bit about how the direction we took in writing *Presto* was a positive one, and I

guess we kind of wanted to solidify that direction a little bit more. And when I say direction, I mean streamlining the sound a little bit, getting back to a more trio-based sound, with added orchestration, as opposed to a definite "four-piece" sound, so to speak.

Your general practice has been to keep music live playable. With sequencing you can really get carried away . . .

Yeah you can, you have to be careful; it's a hard place to know where to draw the line, but for us it's always been important to reproduce our songs as they are on album accurately. If we can accomplish that to a large degree then we can always play with the arrangement from there and try to change things a little bit.

The new record seems to have a more direct rock style, with simpler chord changes and so forth. Are you getting back to basics?

I don't think we look at it so much like that . . . I guess from time to time that's kind of what it is. I think we try to keep a variety in what we're writing, and it seems that whenever we write too much in one direction it's almost a natural instinct to pull back into another direction, so I think what was happening with *Hold Your Fire* is we felt ourselves going over the edge of synthesizer technology. We felt a little bit like the machines were controlling us as opposed to us controlling them, and when

As an upshot of the new Rush album, *Roll The Bones*, being released, the band granted *Metal Maniacs* one of their few and far-between interviews. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we sent musician/Rushofile *Peter Moses* to do the honors.



circa 1986

we went in to write *Presto* I remember quite distinctly Alex and I sitting there, looking at all this synthe gear and all these sequencers and three television screens (!) and going, 'Yeah . . . do we need all this crap?' and just basically making a decision to ignore it, to pull a mike out, plug his guitar in, plug my bass in, turn on the tape machine and start writing like that. So it seemed to be more satisfying, and that's what we kept up with on this album. Later down the road in the life of the song is where you'll say 'Well you know, we got a great basis for a song now, but I feel like it could use a little more in this bridge, or the chorus could be a little more lush and that's when we bring that stuff in now, as an arrangement tool and not as a primary writing tool.

How long did it take to write the material for the new record?

It took about ten weeks—that's writing and rehearsing. Actual writing time was probably more like four weeks, but thrown in with rehearsing the parts . . . we were very well rehearsed before we went in to record this record, that's why the record only took eight weeks to record. That's the quickest it's been since *Permanent Waves*; I think we did *Permanent Waves* in seven weeks.

Pardon my anachronistic phrase, but you seem more influenced now by "black" music, i.e. rap, funk, etc.

You mean music played by black people? I guess so. Again, these are not concerted efforts; they kind of come out like that. I guess you're subtly influenced in ways, sometimes you're more overtly influenced in others and I think the rhythmic influences are usually more kind of subtle. You find yourself writing and you need kind of a groove to get yourself going, and you put something up on the drum machine that has a bit of a lilt to it, a bit of a snap to it, and take it from there. Bands like Red Hot Chili Peppers have a funk influence too, even though they're very much rock bands. I like that direction too, so I would think that that style of rock-funk has had an influence to a subtle degree. I like the Chili Peppers a lot. Lately I've been listening to Haitian music, which is kind of interesting.

So you write with a drum machine?

What happens in the original stage, it's usually Alex and I and our . . . toys, and if I have lyrics to write to then I will try to come up with kind of a vocal melody as a basis, and we'll start writing around that, or sometimes it'll be just a series of guitar chords that feels really good. We'll try to determine a tempo before hand and work out some kind of drum pattern to work with just as a guide, and after the song is in reasonable shape, that's when Neil will come up with his version, or add his new input. He might come in and say 'I think the arrangement could be better' or 'this part works great, have you ever thought about playing it in this time signature?' You know, things like that. The same thing happens with his lyrics, where he'll bring me a lyric



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more

RUSH

continued

and we'll talk about it, sometimes in quite a lot of depth, and change this or restructure that or move the chorus or shorten it, so there's a lot of input back and forth. If I'm working on a basic structure for a verse or chorus that has a lot of vocal melody possibilities, sometimes that'll come first and we'll find the appropriate lyric for that.

So the band influences the lyrics, as opposed to an autonomous Neil?

He doesn't say 'Here are these lyrics, that's what we're using.' He gives me his ideas or his lyrics and says 'what do you think?' We read them and talk about them and some get written and some don't, just like some pieces of music get thrown out and some get used; everybody's gotta like everything before it goes on record. It's a democracy.

Do you have hysterical band battles in rehearsal about parts?

Hysterical wouldn't be a good word to use with us. Sadly, it's pretty gentlemanly.

Neil's drumming seems to have simplified, whereas it always used to be a brand new beat for every part.

I think that's called taste. He's obviously taken a different approach from time to time. I think an attitude that's generally run through the band is that we try to look a lot more at a song from a melodic point of view first; try to get a great vocal melody and have some respect for the vocal performance so that while that's going on there's a little bit of restraint in what's going on underneath it; not that it should be boring but that the intricacies should be a little more subtle so as not to detract from what the song is trying to say lyrically and vocally, and as a lyricist he has taken that even farther and allowed me to work with him to the point where if there are uncomfortable words or too many words in a line, to work on that so that I have freedom of expression to a greater degree vocally. So it's very much a conscious effort to have more respect for what we view to be the classic thing about a great song, which usually begins with a vocal melody and a lyrical idea and ends in a complex but at times subtle arrangement around that.

Do you tend to think in terms of orchestration?

Yeah, to a large degree: what's necessary for this part; what range is necessary; what range is effective; why is this part sounding too muddy, 'cause all the instruments are in the same range? That's something that when you use a lot of instrumentation you always have to be aware of.

No more high singing ... are you sick of it?

Yeah, I'm really sick of it; I don't like the sound of my voice up there any more. I do some of them [older songs, live] up there, but not many; I don't get much pleasure out of it. It's physically a strain—I can do it,

but I don't really consider it much to do with the kind of singing that I'm into doing now; it's kind of one dimensional; it's either on or off. It's hard to have any subtleties in it, so it's hard to shape your voice in that range; it's hard to use your voice as an instrument in a total sense. There's less flexibility, less subtlety throughout to pull your voice in and out of note ranges and slide in and out of notes. You've kind of got to be, 'Boom.' It's something I've learned over the years, and every producer I've worked with has had input into that, and Rupert in particular has been very good; he's someone I've really enjoyed working with as a vocalist, and I think it may be his strongest suit as a producer; his sense of how to get a good performance out of a vocalist; what makes a good vocal performance. Broom was great during his time period, and I have great respect for Peter Collins—I'd like to work with him again, and I'm almost sure that we will—and Rupert is another producer that I've been very happy with, so I feel fortunate we've worked with some really good producers, and I don't think that we will ever put ourselves in the position of working with only one person, that we will continue to change from producer to producer, because we learn more that way.

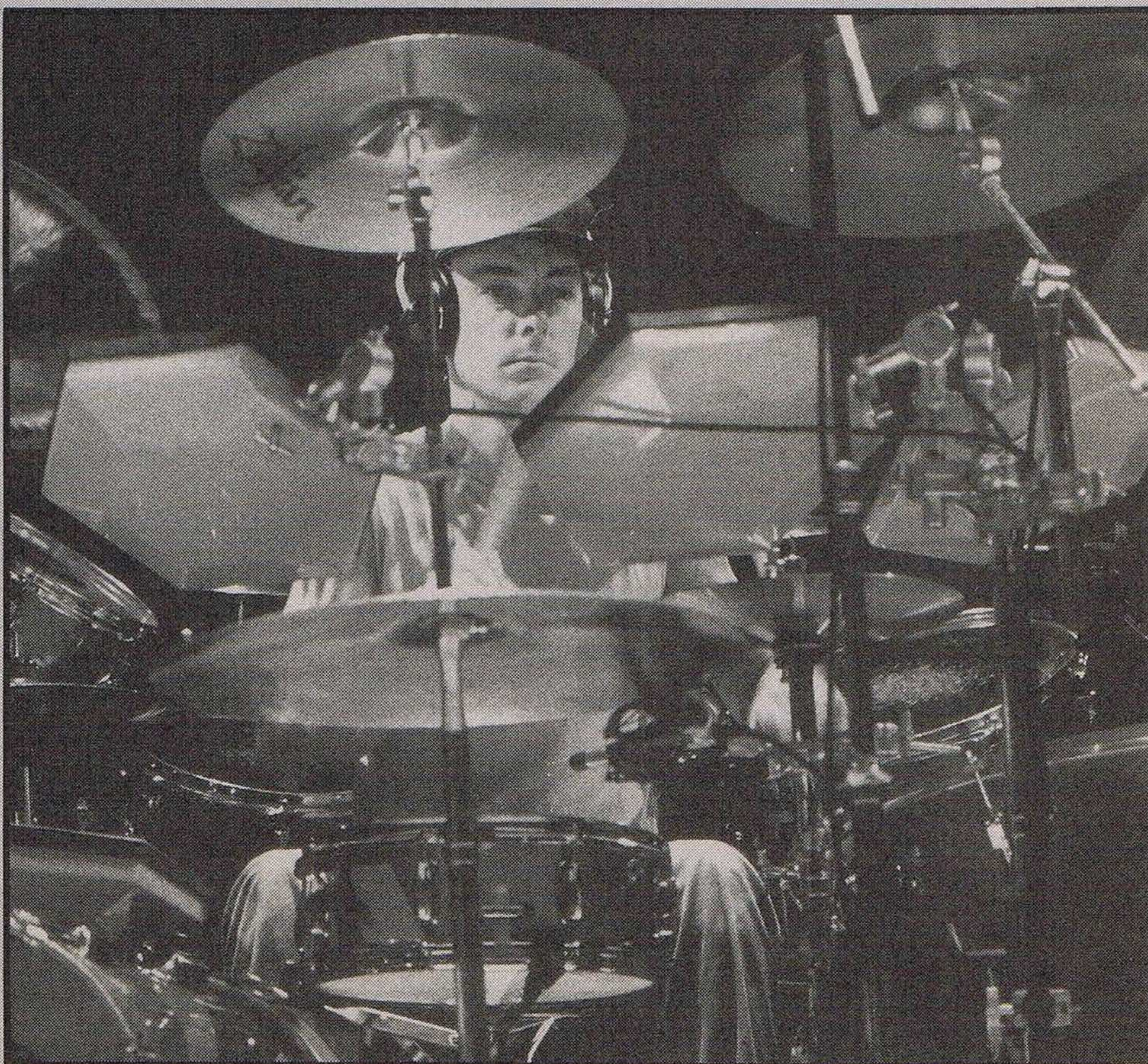
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“Everything that happens to you affects your music.”

circa 1984



“...what you do is an honest expression of where you're at at that time, which I like to think our records are.”



RUSH

continued

Has your family life affected your music?

It's certainly had an effect in my lifestyle, which in turn affects how much time we devote to doing different things. Our touring time has been cut back largely because of that. I won't go more than three weeks without coming home; just won't do it any more. So I think family priorities have guided a lot of the way we do things in terms of organizing the band's time, but I don't think it's affected much of the music. Everything that happens to you affects your music. You know, if you have a really bad morning before you start writing, that's going to affect your music too, so I think you're influenced by a lot of different things. The whole process of growing older and being a writer definitely is reflected in what you do, because what you do is an honest expression of where you're at at that time, which I like to think our records are.

In your press release, Neil talks about a new found energy in the band. Is that due to Atlantic, Rupert Hines?

I think it's probably a bigger thing than that. I don't think it has much to do with a record company, or even a producer, although those things probably subliminally affect the outcome. I think it's more of an

Very vintage



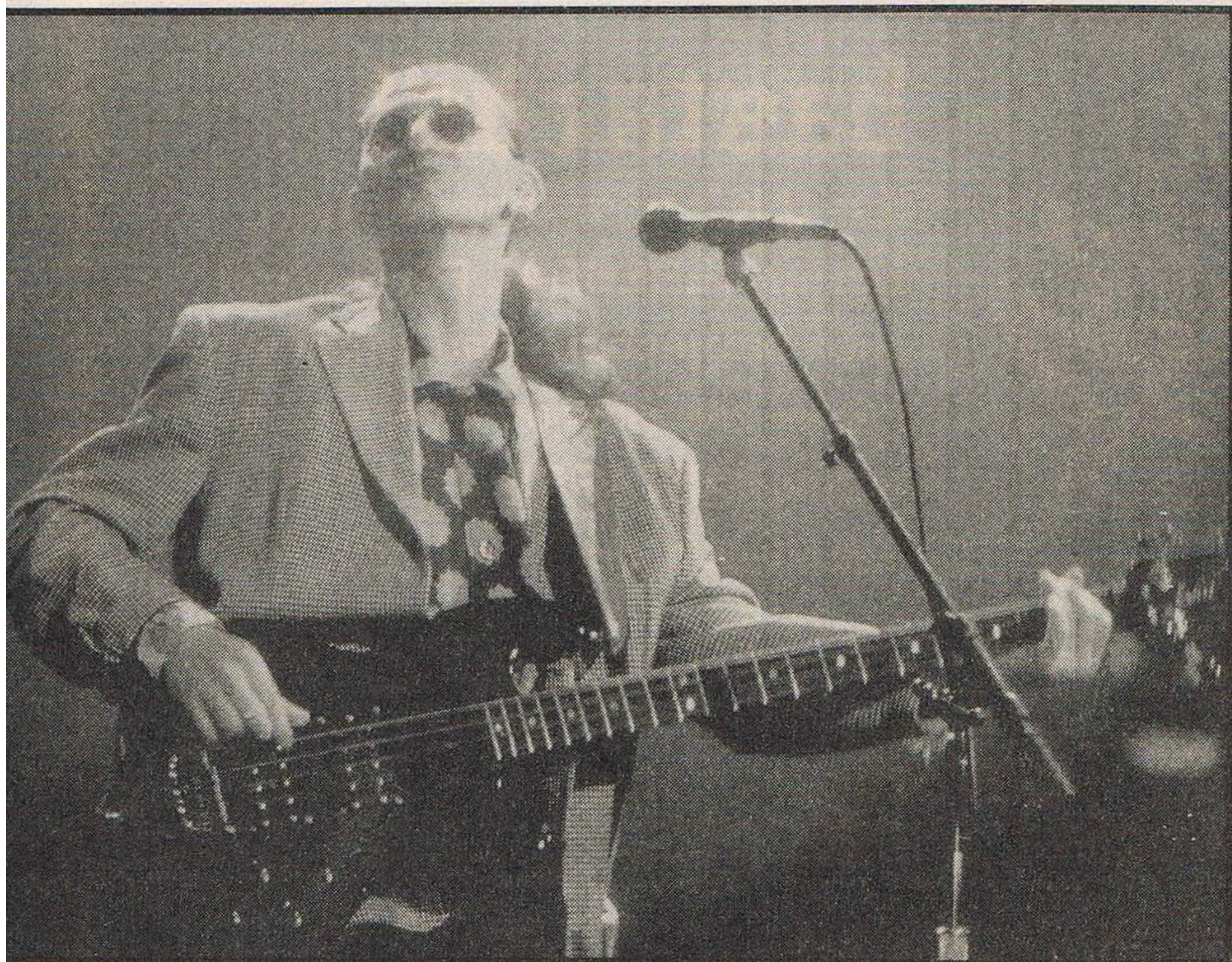
“...we appreciate writing and gigging and things like that more than we did three or four years ago.”

internal thing between the three of us. We've sorted a lot of things out in our lives—personal time things—and I think

we've been able to balance our time in Rush and our time out of Rush in a more realistic and human way, and as a result, I think we're happier people and we appreciate writing and gigging and things like that more than we did three or four years ago. What happens is, when you're not happy on the road due to whatever number of reasons... I think we felt for a while that all our time was being taken up by the band and none of it was being given fair consideration for things you want to do outside the band, so you start building little resentments up, and that's the point when you need a break to get away from it and figure out what it is about being in the band that you still like to do, what you don't like to do, and what you **have** to do to be a part of a functioning band. How do I balance that with the life that I have built here outside of the band without f.cking up the life I have outside of the band? So it's not an easy task.

Have you noticed any trends in terms of who's in your audience?

I don't really have a good feel for who's out there a lot of the time, 'cause it seems to change a lot. Sometimes we play and it seems like everybody's my age out there, and sometimes it looks like everybody's sixteen, and sometimes there seem to be a lot of air guitar players out there, and sometimes you don't see any air guitar players out there—you almost always see a lot of air drummers out there, but you know it kind of changes. Sometimes there's actually a lot of girls in the audience and sometimes there's no girls, so I don't think there is a typical Rush fan.



“...whenever we write too much in one direction it's almost a natural instinct to pull back into another direction...”