

HOBBY

SHOP

BY ANDY SECHER

Each month we invite a rock star to sit down with us and discuss his interests outside of the rock realm. This month's visitor to the *Hobby Shop* is Rush's baseball-mad bassist, Geddy Lee.

RUSH'S GEDDY LEE

Rush's Geddy Lee isn't your average rock star. He doesn't look the part, act the part or sound the part when he talks. The soft-spoken bassist is in many ways the antithesis of the fast-living, fast-talking, slow-thinking rock stereotype. Even when it comes to his hobbies Geddy is a little apart from the norm. His passions include baseball, photography and travel, all of which he works into Rush's hectic work schedule. Now, with the release of a new album, *Counterparts*, Lee and bandmates Neil Peart (drums) and Alex Lifeson (guitar) will have to temporarily put their hobbies on the back burner as they concentrate on the group's six-month world tour; but prior to doing so, Lee provided us with some special insights into his free-time pleasures in this month's installment of *Hobby Shop*.

Hit Parader: Geddy, your passion for baseball has been well noted; you even sang the Canadian national anthem at this year's all-star game. Do you collect baseball memorabilia?

Geddy Lee: As a matter of fact I've got quite a collection of rare autographed baseballs. The most valuable ones I have include a ball that has the signatures of both Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. I also have a ball signed by Ty Cobb, and I recently picked one up that was signed by Cy Young.

HP: Those are all stars of baseball's past. Do you collect items from today's stars as well?

GL: I have some, but I think I'm more attracted to the items from the stars

from an earlier era. I've been lucky to get to know quite a few of today's players and it's great that some of them have as much respect for Rush as I have for baseball.

HP: How did you land the gig of singing your national anthem at this year's all-star game?

GL: I was asked to do it; it was really that simple. I had been asked to do it before at various games, and I just didn't want to. But when the chance came to do it at the all-star game, and to visit Camden Yards, the new stadium in Baltimore, I couldn't resist. The funny part was that I was really very nervous. I thought that after performing for so many years I couldn't get nervous anymore. But standing in front of 50,000 people, and knowing that a few hundred million more are watching on TV does get to you a little. But it was fun.

HP: What other hobbies do you have?

GL: I've always had a passion for photography, but recently I haven't worked with my cameras as much

as I have in the past. My other passion is travel. I like to combine those two interests by going on nature safaris all over the world. Recently my family and I have been to East Africa and Nepal, and those were amazing trips. When you can take photographs of wildlife in their natural environment, it's just an incredible experience.

HP: Are there any places in the world



you haven't traveled to yet, especially on tour with Rush?

GL: Actually, there are a lot of places we haven't been to yet. We've never played in South America, which is kind of surprising since that's already been proven to be a fairly strong rock and roll market. And aside from Japan, we really haven't played the Far East. That also has opened up in recent years.

What happens is that we try and limit our tours to about six months, and during that time we try to give ourselves a little time off. We don't want to burn ourselves out, which is something we came close to doing about ten years ago. When you limit yourself like that, you basically have time to tour North America, Europe and Japan—the places where you know you have a strong fol-

lowing. The chances to get anywhere else are very limited just because of time.

HP: With **Counterparts** it seems that Rush has a more energetic and straightforward sound. Was that done with your stage work in mind?

GL: I don't think we ever think about the way a song will sound on stage when we're in the studio. Those are two entirely different places for us. Perhaps Neil limits some of his drum parts because he wants to be able to reproduce them live. An album like this is a little more straightforward for us because we turned away from some of the technology we've utilized on the last few records. It's still very much a Rush album, but there has been that slight change; it was just something we felt like doing.

HP: You're coming up on your 20th Anniversary in Rush. How does that fact sit with you?

GL: I find it both amazing and a little over-

Alex Lifeson (left) and Geddy Lee: "The most valuable baseball I own is signed by both Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth."

whelming. I guarantee you when we first started we had no idea we'd be around this long. But I think we've created a body of work that we're very proud of. Even some of the songs and albums that I didn't particularly like when we were working on them, for whatever reason, I now can listen to and realize there's something good there. 20 years is a long time, and to think that we're still as vital and as hungry as ever, and that we may be making the best music of our lives at the moment, is very rewarding.

