

MUSIC REVIEW | RUSH

Group rocks with expansive set

By Gary Budzak
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Get on with the fascination: A comeback and a birthday were celebrated in fine style Thursday at Polaris Amphitheater.

Rush, Canada's best rock group, put on an epic show that coincided with rock station WLWQ's (96.3 FM) 25th anniversary. The tribute was said to be the first time the power trio has plugged a station in concert, not surprising from a band whose canon includes *The Spirit of Radio*.

A bit of personal history: Nearly 25 years ago, this scribe was buying his first stereo system with money from a high-school job. The local Radio Shack endured repeated playings of the 2112 Overture as I tested speakers. What a rush of memories it was to hear that familiar synthesizer whoosh and guitar echo again, this time at concert volume.

Going into the millennium, I didn't think anyone would hear Rush play 2112 in 2002. The daughter and wife of drummer Neil Peart died in 1997 and 1998, and the band was shelved for a time. Yet in May, the group released a new, hard-rocking album, *Vapor Trails*.

Thursday, three dryers tumbled what turned out to be T-shirts for lucky front-row fans as the band arrived onstage. Sure, there were pyro, lasers, videos of wormholes in space and dragons, even a pretty maid who checked the dryers. But the best



RONNIE BIANCO / FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Geddy Lee, lead singer and bassist for Rush, performs during Thursday's show at the Polaris Amphitheater.

visuals showed guitarist Alex Lifeson grinning like a kid, bassist/singer Geddy Lee going into semiduckwalk mode, and Peart bashing his rotating drum kit with grim determination. When Lifeson did a childlike rendition of *Happy Birthday* for Q-FM, even Peart cracked a smile.

Rush started with several FM staples — *Tom Sawyer*, *Distant Early Warning*, *New World Man* and *Roll the Bones* — before playing *Earthshine*, a standout on *Vapor Trails*.

Then the group switched among obscure album tracks (with help from fan polling on the Web site www.rushpetition.com), new tunes and some old favorites. What sometimes has sounded sterile on disc rocked furiously in concert.

Big Money, *Limelight*, *Working Man*, *Cygnus X-1*, *One Little Victory*, *Ceiling Unlimited* and *By-Tor & the Snow Dog* were among the gems of the 27-song, 2½-hour concert.

The "thinking man's rock group" drew 9,050 mostly male, brewski-swilling alt guitar and drum players. It was fascinating to see tipsy dudes swaying and boogieing as Lee shrieked, "We are the priests of the temples of Syring!"

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TODAY ON THE TOWN

► **Best of Shadowbox**, Shadowbox Cabaret, 8 p.m., Easton Town Center. Tickets: \$10 to \$25. Call 614-265-7625.
► **Mark Dvorak**, 7 p.m., Dublin Community Recreation Center, 5600 Post Rd. Tickets: \$8 and \$10. Call 614-410-4550.
► **Free To Be... You and Me**, 2 and 7:30 p.m., Park Street Theatre, 512 N. Park St. Tickets: \$8 to \$16. Call 614-224-6672.
► **Friends and Lovers**, 2Co's Cabaret, 8 p.m., 790 N. High St. Tickets: \$5 and \$15. Call 614-470-2267.
► **Fuddy Meers**, Otterbein Summer Theatre, 8 p.m., Campus

Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Westerville. Tickets: \$16. Call 614-823-1109.

► **The Missing Rubles of Nepal**, Murder Mystery Players, 8 p.m., Dave & Buster's, 3665 Park Mill Run Dr., Hilliard. Tickets: \$32.95, including dinner. Call 614-771-1515.

► **Lovin' Spoonful**, Rare Earth and Dr. Hook Featuring Ray Sawyer, Ohio State Fair, 7 p.m., Celeste Center, Ohio Expo Center, 1-71 and E. 17th Avenue; free with fair admission. Call 614-644-3247 or 1-888-646-3976.

► **Othello**, Actors' Theatre, 8 p.m., Schiller Park amphitheater, German Village; free, with donations accepted. Call 614-

444-6888

► **Romeo**

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I XXX (PG-13) 8:50
THE BATTLE OF BULGARIA (PG) 11:00
LATE SHOW (PG) 11:00
SIGNS (PG-13) 8:50
REIGN OF FIRE (PG-13) 10:47
LATE SHOW (PG) 11:00
South Twin Drive in 491-6771
I SPT KIDS 2 (PG) 8:50
MEN IN BLACK 2 (PG-13) 10:40
LATE SHOW (PG) 11:00
II MULTI POWERED TOOLS (PG-13) 8:50
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Stuart Little 2 (PG) 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00

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