

## Rush remains Canada's top pop export

By Bill Anderson  
 The Canadian Press

**W**ITH LITTLE FANFARE at home, Rush just carries on as Canada's leading export to the world of pop music.

Rush has been on the Canadian scene for almost 20 years now, and its new record, *Presto*, marks the 17th release for this progressive-rock power trio.

Yet perhaps because they play a loud, abstract and rather unfashionable brand of music, their success may not be widely appreciated in Canada.

But consider their staggering sales figures — 30 million albums worldwide, according to their Toronto-based label Anthem Records.

By comparison, a spokesman for Anne Murray estimates the singer has sold 20 million albums around the world.

### Pop trend ignored

For Bryan Adams, the estimate is between 14 and 15 million; for Bachman-Turner Overdrive, about 10 million.

If Rush has become the most successful pop music act in Canadian history, it has done so, in a sense, by ignoring pop trends. Most progressive rockers faded away in the late '70s, but Rush just kept at it, developing an intensely loyal following for a kind of music that, if done right, was plainly still in demand.

This is perhaps the essence of Rush — a serious commitment to their own music combined with strong respect for the audience.

"We always pour our hearts into an album," says drummer and lyricist Neil Peart. "But it's also the artist's responsibility to communicate what you're trying to say well enough, so that people can get it."

"It's not being commercial, it's being accessible."

### Semantic wedges

This kind of conceptual hair-splitting is typical of Peart, who said during a recent interview in Toronto that he likes to "drive semantic wedges into ideas that don't really exist and drag them out and stamp them with something I'm thinking about."

On the new record, Peart deals with a number of these self-created conundrums, especially the distinction between dreams and illusions.

In Peart's view, dreams are realizable goals that inspire one to live a better life; illusions are fantasies, often held over from adolescence, that just defeat one's possibilities.

This can get a bit precious and heady at times — it's progressive rock, after all. But most of the songs on *Presto* contain an enjoyable blend of spacey metaphor and literal meaning, provided, as always, you can get past the wailing vocals of bassist Geddy Lee.



Alex Lifeson (left), Neil Peart and Geddy Lee make up the power rock trio, Rush.

The most striking tune on *Presto* is a song called *The Pass*, which contains a gorgeous, haunting melody in a parable about the glorification of toughness and anger. It seems particularly aimed at youth and working-class culture, where the "rebel without a cause" is often viewed as an exciting and romantic figure.

"That's certainly the song I worked hardest on, because it's such a delicate subject," Peart says. "It's sad that there are people who are so fragile that they cannot take the brutality of life, but to start honoring that and seeing it as a heroic epic is something different."

Peart's songs, understandably, are optimistic and full of energy, and they seem to stem from a genuine thirst for life. He is an avid cyclist, traveller and adventurer — he recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa — and there's a wide-eyed sense of wonder on *Presto* that grows more infectious with each listen.

### Full of energy

"Another theme on the album is response," says Peart. "The idea that you don't go through life just looking at things. "It doesn't matter if you've been all around the world — you may have seen it, but if you haven't felt it, you haven't been there."

When he wanted a change, he formed a band with an Israeli guitarist and performed at Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs.

Shukri went into the record business in 1981 and was encouraged to return to Israel last year after his third album was a big success in the country with the song *Rona*, which he dedicated to his five-year-old daughter.

"We were married by a reform rabbi in the United States and had a big wedding party in Acre with all my family."

Shukri said he and his wife separated about a year ago, partly because she did not want to live in Israel.

## Shukri brings Arabs, Israelis together with songs

TEL AVIV (Reuter) — Arab singer Samir Shukri began his career performing at Jewish weddings, bar mitzvahs and Israeli nightclubs in New York.

Now he's the first Arab musician to enjoy success in Israel. Shukri says he hopes his songs — Middle Eastern music with lyrics in both Hebrew and Arabic — can do what nearly all politicians have failed to do: bring Jews and Arabs closer together.

### Man of peace

"It's very hard to see ... Arab and Jewish people dying," Shukri, 35, said in an interview. "I'm a man of peace and you can see it in my albums."

"I sing in both Arabic and Hebrew

and that's a symbol of getting both peoples together. Arab and Jewish people come to my performances and I see them sitting together. I think: If the big politicians don't bring peace, I will bring peace."

Shukri, a Muslim raised in the mixed Arab-Jewish town of Acre in northern Israel, is also novel in his musical style. He plays Middle Eastern melodies with a violin and often injects medleys of classical music into his songs.

An energetic and charming performer, Shukri has appeared on Israeli television's most popular variety show and won praise from Israeli music critics.

Shukri says he never gets involved in politics or the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the occu-

pled territories. His lifestyle certainly suggests he has no nationalist aspirations.

He lives in the completely Jewish town of Holon, near Tel Aviv, and has even left a mezuzah, a case enclosing a parchment with Jewish religious texts, attached to his doorpost.

### Poster

Inside his modest apartment, a poster of Israeli warplanes and a trophy from the air force, both received for benefit concerts, decorate his living room wall.

Small and dark with a dimpled face, Shukri says he has not encountered any Arab opposition to his Hebrew songs or his popularity among Israelis.

"In Gaza and in Nablus, they like my music. I get letters from Egypt,

Iraq and a lot of Arab countries. They love it, really. They hear their music with another language. People are sick and tired of seeing people dead in the newspapers."

Palestinians in the occupied territories say they are not as familiar with Shukri's songs as Israeli Arabs but praise him for spreading Arab music and culture to the Jews.

"I think it's something good," said Mohammed Batrawi, director of the Palestinian Cultural Centre. "He is exposing our culture there."

In Israel, most of Shukri's fans are Sephardic or Oriental Jews who came to Israel from Arab countries and enjoy eastern music much more than their European counterparts.

"It doesn't matter that he's an Arab," said Lital Shemesh, a Jewish bank teller of Iraqi descent. "He is a wonderful singer and I enjoy him more than Jewish Middle Eastern singers. He's more real."

Shukri left Israel at age 18 to go to New York, where he began his career. He performed in four Israeli

nightclubs in Manhattan and eventually began singing in Hebrew.

When he wanted a change, he formed a band with an Israeli guitarist and performed at Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs.

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### Married

In 1981 Shukri had married an American Jewish woman whose parents thought he was an Israeli Jew until she told them the truth a week before the wedding.

"Her mother freaked out," he remembered. "Her sister and brother didn't want to come to the wedding."

"We were married by a reform rabbi in the United States and had a big wedding party in Acre with all my family."

Shukri said he and his wife separated about a year ago, partly because she did not want to live in Israel.

## Musical treasures preserved

N.Y. Times News Service

NEW YORK — In a cluttered corner of the basement of the New York Public Library at Lincoln Centre, Seth Winner, an audio engineer, threaded a reel of film through what is believed to be the world's only extant selenophone.

An ungainly cross between a film projector and a tape recorder, the selenophone, invented in 1934, was a device that recorded sound on film. Its advantage, in its day, was that it offered greater uninterrupted recording and playing time than the era's 78 rpm disks.

Its drawback was that as a film process, the recordings were made as negatives, and had to be developed and printed before they could be played back. By the end of the Second World War, the system was displaced by more efficient magnetic tape.

The thin strip of sound film that Winner was threading held a musical treasure — a performance of Wagner's *Meistersinger*, one of five operas recorded on the selenophone at the 1937 Salzburg Festival.

The legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini was on the podium, as he was for that summer's productions of Mozart's *Zauberflöte* and Verdi's *Faust*. The other two works, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Nozze di Figaro*, were conducted by Bruno Walter, another of the era's great conductors.

The selenophone, which came to the library as part of the extensive Toscanini collection that the library acquired from the conductor's family in 1987, is essentially a showpiece now.

### Archival tape

Having carefully restored the machine, Winner has spent the last several months transferring the operas to archival tape, correcting speed problems and doing some sonic touching-up along the way. As a result, there is really no need to play them on the selenophone again.

The recordings, which captured Toscanini's final performances of fully staged, complete operas, may be heard at the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives, on the third floor of the Lincoln Centre library.

Also available are more than 150 hours of the conductor's rehearsals, a collection that covers the last 28 years of Toscanini's career, ranging from recordings made at La Scala in Milan in October 1926, through his final rehearsal with the NBC Symphony in New York on April 4, 1954. These rehearsal tapes afford a listener a glimpse backstage as the autocratic Italian conductor, who died in 1957, prepares a performance. It also gives a broader view of Toscanini's repertory than his commercial recordings.

In addition to the rehearsals, there are hundreds of concert performance recordings, which will also become part of the library's working collection as soon as Winner transfers them.

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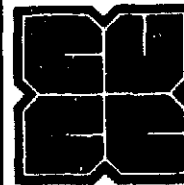
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