

1.  
THE THREAT TO  
OUR NATION'S YOUTH

# ROCK AGAINST RIGHT-WING ROCK BEING CALLED FASCIST

**W**HY? WHAT? Where? When? and Who? are the general principles of journalism. Finding out facts. In this particular case the Who? Where? and When? are easy: Rush, Glasgow, Thursday last.

Why? is a little more complex.

The obvious reason for running a feature on Rush is that they're an exceptionally successful rock band, presumably popular with the record buying/concert going public. In other words, you.

Then there's the added spice of the fact that Rush are not a 'fashionable' band either musically or in their supposed political stance.

This places their success in a different light and also makes them an appetisingly easy target for critical thrusts and well-aimed wit.

After all, it's not every day a bunch of Longhair Mystic 'Fascists' from across the water obligingly lay their collective neck on the butcher's block, offering the intrepid young reporter a prime chance to strike a blow for the forces of contemporary music and social equality.

... A Child's Guide To Unmasking Fifth Column Infiltrators — Fifth Columnists moreover who haven't even been blessed with the decency of good taste to employ a modern vehicle for the conveyance of their propaganda.

Firstly however, it only fair to make clear my position regarding the band and the music they play.

Does he like them? I hear you ask.

The answer, perhaps unfortunately, is no. I think the music is dull and boring. Neither can I find any solace in their romantically mysterious, cumbersome and pompous lyrics.

So why am I writing this article? The simple answer is that I'm interested; interested in the appeal and effect this music has, interested in the motives, and interested in the possible ramifications.

And so to business.

**A**CKNOWLEDGING the fact that rock-jargon is a facile by-product of a facile product, it is probably true to state that Rush are a 'hard' rock band who play 'heavy music'.

But personally I believe that if you're ready to toss terms like that around, then you should be prepared to define them.

Rush's music is 'heavy' because it relies for its impact and appeal on an obvious, repetitive beat created by the fusion of over-loud bass and busily meticulous drumming, enhanced by fairly constant and usually dexterous lead guitar solos.

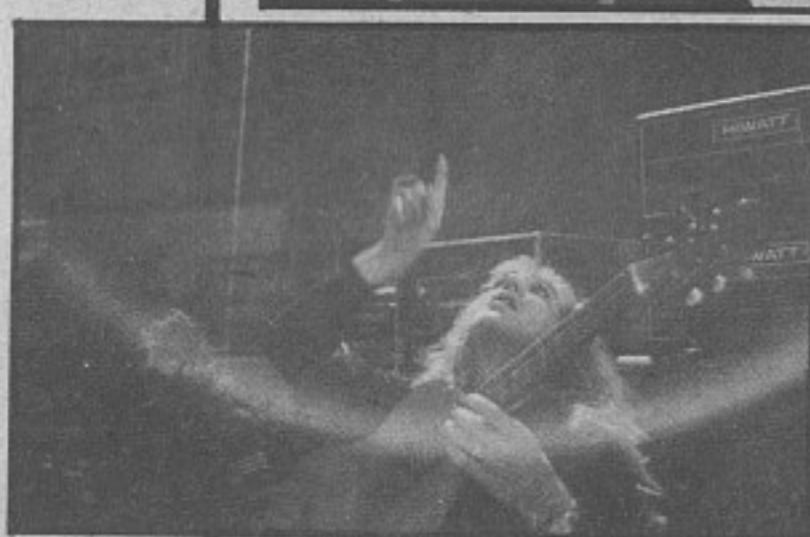
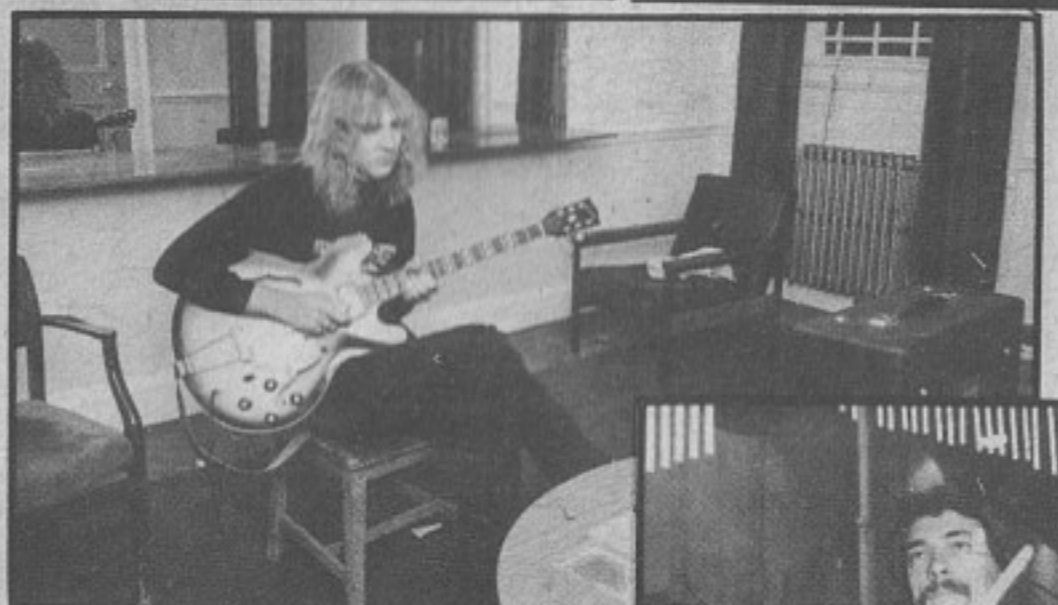
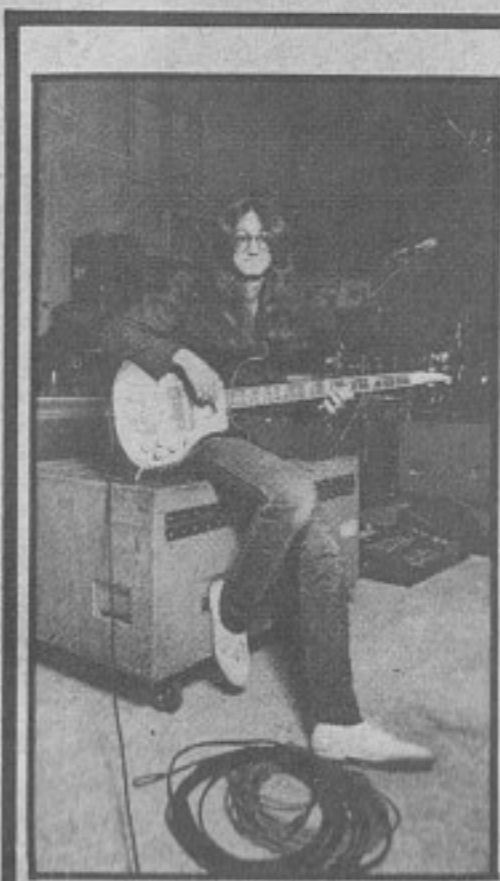
Its attitude is 'hard' because the musicians — consciously or otherwise — are perpetuating and promoting, by virtue of the well-thumbed catalogue of stances and poses they flick through, the tough, and ambiguously (bi)sexual projection that is a basic principle of rock'n'roll.

They are — in part at least — rock'n'roll because they rely solely on, and aim purposefully for a purely emotional/physical response.

Musically they have evolved from a predictable and unastonishing rock band, as typified on their first Mercury album 'Rush', into a bourgeoisie, grandiloquent rock band — a style initially formulated on the arrival of drummer / lyricist Neil Peart and the subsequent release of 'Fly By Night', developed through '2112', and further refined on their most recent studio album, 'Hemispheres'.

Their music is a demonstration of old skills and techniques, an exhibition of the obvious — often in fancy dress, with little room allowed for speculation (on the

... in which capitalist H.M. technoflash dealers  
RUSH reckon they've been badly done by and talk to  
JOHN HAMBLETT.



Pix: FIN COSTELLO

part of the listener) or improvisation (on the part of the musicians).

However, the problem to which we should address ourselves at this point is not whether this is a 'good' thing or a 'bad' thing, but whether they are successful (artistically and commercially)

within the zone in which they have chosen to operate?

And the answer has to be yes.

Rush are singularly successful in their chosen field.

Their albums sell in huge quantities. Their tours are guaranteed sell-outs. Artistically, it could be argued, they are also

successful (though this point is not nearly so self-evident as the former), as they are powerfully competent musicians whose skills more than satisfy the apparent cultural requirements of their audience. Indeed, their fans would insist that they are inspired musicians and nothing less.

**A**FTER THURSDAY night's gig at the Apollo I asked Neil Peart what criteria he used to gauge the success of the band's live work:

"Oh, I would have to say that the main consideration is how well I played, and how well the rest of the band played. If I feel that I have played well then great, but if play badly then no amount of audience adulation is going to convince me otherwise.

"Of course other factors do contribute: the audience can make a gig better, and technical problems also have an effect. Obviously the ideal gig would be if I played up to my potential, with no technical problems and in front of a great audience."

The general opinion of Rush held by the majority of rock critics can probably be best summed up by quoting a typically witty reply CSM penned in Gas Bag only last week: "That's okay Lyn. Think of all the people who're too young to tell Rush from Bullshit."

In all honesty I must confess to feeling quite some sympathy with that sentiment. But it must be said that there were a couple of thousand or more people at the Glasgow Apollo obviously thought differently. And not all of them were young.

The performance was frighteningly close to faultless. The beat remained strong and constant. The solos were for the most part immaculately executed. Rush fans had good cause to feel jubilant.

What, I wondered, made these people fans? Where does the appeal lie?

"I think that there is something fundamentally attractive about the beat of the music we play," says Peart. "I think it reaches people on a very basic level. We aim for, and get I feel, an emotional response from our audience."

In pursuit of that emotional response, Rush bolster their live music with all manner of flagrantly vacuous, visual rhetoric; smoke bombs, dry ice, the whole kitandkaboole. I put it to Peart that the band were simply going through Predictably Empty Motions in order to gross Predictable Empty Reactions.

"No, no, I don't think that's the case. We only use visual effects where and when we feel they enhance the music. We'd never use visual effects if we thought they detracted from the musical performance.

"For example, the dry-ice comes on to coincide with a particularly sparse section and in doing so goes toward creating an entire picture."

Oh I know it's all old hat, right? But it's the most professionally and thoughtfully choreographed old hat I have ever seen. Just what prize this dubious merit qualifies them for in the Aesthetic Sweepstakes I don't know — what more can be said with any degree of originality and conviction on the subject of aesthetics in relation to Rush and their ilk.

In the final analysis beauty is an abstract quality; nothing can be said to be intrinsically beautiful or aesthetically pleasing. If it could we would all find exactly the same kinds of music attractive. It would make this job easier. Thank God it isn't.

**M**AKE SURE that the next time you see them, you see them with your eyes open, and know what you see. I, for one don't like it. "Thus ended the last Rush article to appear within these hallowed pages. Penned by Miles, it was the only article I'd ever read about the band — a fact I pointed out to Peart during the course of our conversation.

"Hell, what did you expect to meet after reading that? You must have been expecting to be introduced to a bunch of Nazis (the thought had crossed my mind).

"What Miles said in that interview was that basically we are a bunch of nice-guy Nazis — which,

Continues over

## RUSH

■ From previous page

of course, is not true."

You feel you were misrepresented?

"Oh, absolutely. That was a very dishonest article. I was under the impression that Miles and I had gotten on very well. I even gave him my address in New York and told him to stop by any time he was in the neighbourhood. All that so-called political dialogue took place after the interview had finished; we were just chatting, really amiably, I thought, and he twisted it all round. I just feel that it was basically dishonest."

But surely if you actually said the things that Miles quoted you as saying, and you sincerely believed them to be true, you have no right to be upset or surprised to see them in print.

"Oh, you're absolutely right. When you're in this position you have to be prepared to be on trial all the time."

"My argument is that he misrepresented the things that were said; took it all out of context. As far as I was concerned all I was doing was

taking up a contrary stance in what I considered to be an essentially philosophical argument — and he made it appear to be political dogma.

"He represented us as fascist fanatics... and if that were the case we would have the world's first Jewish Nazi Bass Player (laugh). It's ludicrous. We're not fascists. We're not racists. I was very upset when I read that article. In America when you call someone a fascist it's the worst, y'know? It's the pits. But over here, I now realise, that in certain quarters anyone who isn't a socialist is, by definition, a fascist. (Laughs.)"

Rush make no secret of the fact that they don't align themselves with the socialist cause; they are in fact self-confessed 'capitalists'.

A capitalist, as far as I am aware, is not the same thing as a fascist. Fascism, and stop me if you've heard this one before, initially was an authoritarian, and nationalistic right-wing political movement founded in 1919 in Italy by Benito Mussolini; now the concept has broadened in general usage to encompass any right wing, anti-Communist, or racist party, or political ideology — plus

schoolteachers, football supporters, the police, sub-editors, GPO, KGB, CGI, NCB, and a whole host of other individuals and public bodies depending on just who's pointing the finger.

Rush are not racists; they are not nationalists; and they firmly believe — rightly or wrongly — that the extreme left are just as likely to implement an authoritarian government as the extreme right.

"Basically we absolutely believe in the total freedom of the individual. Politics only constitutes the tip of the iceberg in that respect. I'm not so much concerned with politics as an end as with the role they play in a broader philosophy. To present a picture of us as a right-wing political band would be totally false; it would be a totally warped picture."

"It's like the National Front's television broadcast (shown that night). They were presenting a totally false picture of themselves and their policies; they were only showing the tip of the iceberg — coming on TV all smiles and charm, skimming right over the top of all their most offensive policies, when everybody knows that they are racist and right-wing

fanatics.

"This may sound corny, or banal, but when people call me a fascist it hurts. I'm a sensitive person, and I don't want to be identified with people like the National Front. I was working over here in England when they got their first wave of publicity, and I know what they are all about and I don't like it."

**T**HE MESSIANIC filibusters of the reactionary, dogmatic left would have us believe that Rush — and their like — will be damned out of their own mouths. But all anyone has to do is listen to the lyrics; *world domination does not come into it.*

You could say they were reactionary, though.

"Lyrics are definitely of secondary importance as far as I'm concerned," says Peart. "When I joined the band I had no intention of writing lyrics, but somebody had to do it, so... actually, quite often I've got a tune in my head while I'm writing the words; so I'm writing the lyrics to fit a melody."

Yes, but surely you must have an idea in your head that you want to communicate when you sit down to write a song. Lyrics don't come from thin air.

What about 'Trees' for example; that seems to me to be a definite and resolute dictum against trade unionism and organised labour.

"Really (apparently surprised at the suggestion), I can assure you that that wasn't the intention. Initially that song came about as a cartoon. I sat down after a gig somewhere and it came to me all of a sudden, this very vivid visual cartoon. It was the fastest song I ever wrote; I wrote it in about five minutes, actually."

"I suppose it's basically about the crazy way people act. This false ideal of equality they try and create. I simply believe that certain people are better at doing certain things than other people. Some people are naturally talented — they have a gift or whatever — and some people aren't. This doesn't mean that these people are greater human beings, by virtue of that talent, it merely means they are more talented."

*"There is unrest in the forest  
There is trouble with the trees  
For the Maples want more  
sunlight  
And the Oaks ignore their  
pleas"*

*The trouble with the Maples  
(And they're quite convinced  
they're right)  
They say the Oaks are just too  
lofty  
And they grab all the light*

*So the Maples form a union  
And demand equal rights  
'The Oaks are just too greedy  
We will make them give us  
light'  
Now there's no more Oak  
oppression  
For they have passed a noble  
law  
And the trees are all kept  
equal  
By hatchet  
Axe  
And saw." — Trees.*

**I**F IN SOME moral referendum we were asked to cast a vote on the subject, hopefully we would all put a cross in the box marked 'Freedom Of Expression'; but would that necessarily mean that we agreed on the definition of that term?

Should freedom of expression be allotted to only those who would express the things we feel should be expressed in a manner in which we, ourselves, would choose to express them?

Should, in fact, Neil Peart be allowed to write songs like 'Trees' and play them to who knows how many thousands of young (impressionable?) people, whether or not the views articulated through those songs are politically fashionable or express principles that you and I deem morally unjustifiable?

In a nutshell, should freedom of expression be accorded to everyone, regardless of whether or not they would utilise that freedom in a manner we would consider 'good' — feeding the starving millions in Biafra, writing classic literature, helping old ladies across the road etc — or 'bad' — molesting children, denying similar freedom to others, appearing on The Old Grey Whistle Test etc?

It's a big question, and one you should not allow anyone to answer for you. While you thinking about it ponder on this:

*"There is hardly a vice or crime  
(according to our own moral standards) which has not at sometime or other, in some circumstances, been looked upon as a moral and religious duty. Stealing was accounted virtuous among young Spartans, and among the Indian cast of Thug. In the ancient world Piracy, i.e. robbery and murder, was considered a respectable profession. To the Medieval Christian religious persecution was the highest duty, and so on."*

— Canon Rashdall.

**O**NE THING I found more than mildly disturbing was the obvious relish with which the Glasgow audience chanted through 'Trees'. I asked Peart if he had been aware of the community singing, and if so, was he not worried that the audience might misconstrue his message.

"Yeah, I heard the singing. They sang through 'Close To The Heart' too, it was great. I don't think I agree with you about the audience misinterpreting the message though. As I said before, it's an emotional response we get from our audience. I don't know how aware they are of the lyrics, generally speaking."

"And anyway if they do misconstrue them, am I responsible for that? Can I take responsibility for what all those people might or might not think? How long could I maintain my artistic integrity if every time I sat down to write a song I had to worry about whether or not it was open to misinterpretation? All I can do is carry on the best I can, and hope people can see me for what I am."

If the lyrics are of so little importance how come you bother to print them on your album sleeves?

"Well whatever I do, I try to do well. I try to do it to the best of my ability. I put an awful lot of work into my lyrics and I feel they deserve to be seen. I can only tell the truth as I see it, right? I know it's a big responsibility being a rock star, and believe me there are some sides of it that I find very seamy, and there are some aspects of it that I resent."

"For example I resent the infringements on my privacy; ideally I would like to be completely anonymous when I'm not on stage."

"And there are the facets over which I have no control; like the people who sell programmes and badges, and the kid who buys a scarf and then walks two miles home in the pouring rain, and by the time he gets there his scarf is ruined, and his mother gets straight on the phone and says, 'Heh, my kid just got home with a scarf he just paid two dollars for and it's all shrivelled up.'"

"There are all kinds of things like that which I really resent, but what can I do? Can I be held personally responsible for all of that?"

Good question. Can the artist be held morally responsible for the possible reactions his work may trigger off in the psyche of anybody who happens to view it or hear it?

Surely not.

**A**SKED PEART whether he felt the artist had a responsibility, or duty, to mirror the prevalent political or social climate through his work.

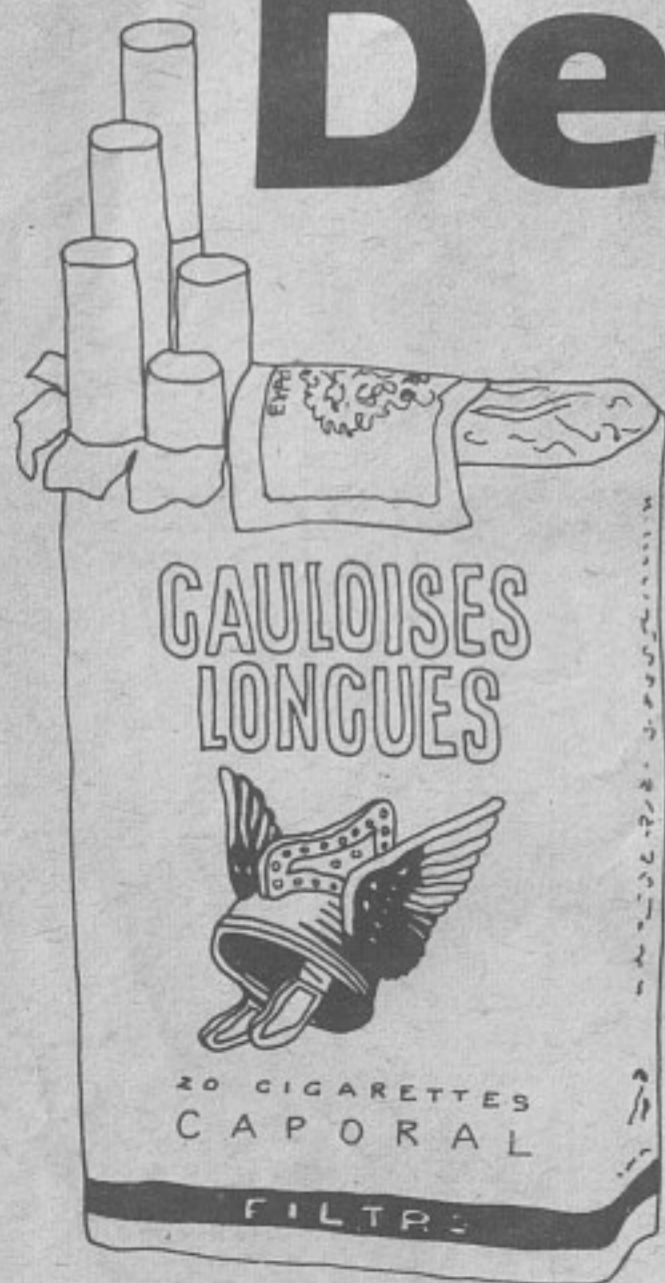
"Ah, now you're asking me a very big question; what you're asking in effect, is Should The Artist Imitate Life, or should Life Imitate The Artist? I'm not so sure that I've got an answer to that one. I feel that an artist can only strive to honestly express what he feels."

"A point many people seem to overlook in discussions of this kind is that the artist is only a human being, and if he portrays his or her feelings, then chances are that he or she will be showing many people what they are feeling. I guess that's the best answer I can give, though it doesn't really answer your question."

Before we shook hands and effectively went our separate ways I asked him if he had an ambition: "Yeah to continue to improve as a drummer and lyricist. I would also like to write a book. I don't know whether or not I could do that. I suppose lots of people have tried and failed. But there are a lot of things I would like to say, so I'm determined to try."

Remember, as someone once said, 'The next time you see them, make sure you see them with your eyes open, and know what you see...'

# How Dagenham can seem like Deauville.



41 stockists in Dagenham now sell the longer, milder French kings! Gauloises Longues—The cigarette of France. 52p.

## Gauloises Longues

LOW TO MIDDLE TAR As defined by H.M. Government  
H.M. Government Health Departments' WARNING:  
CIGARETTES CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH