

Accent on music

Rush contends with 'tour crisis'

TORONTO (CP) — On the other end of the phone, one of the most respected drummers on the planet is sounding, well, a little intense.

Neil Peart, who's also the lyricist for Toronto's legendary hard rock band Rush, is suffering from, what he calls, "mid-tour crisis."

"We have 46 people working for us, sort of like a travelling circus," says Peart, who was about to take off for Quebec's Laurentian Mountains.

"There's internal rivalries, spats, feuds . . . Somebody's quitting, somebody's getting fired, all those things go on in the middle."

Peart and the two other members of Rush — singer-bassist Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson — are on a much-needed break from their current world tour which began last October and hits Europe in April.

The hiatus came just as Canada's music industry was gearing up for the 1992 Juno Awards, which were presented last Sunday.

Rush, renowned for its superior musicianship, received 38 Juno nominations but has won only six of the awards. The band was also named group of the decade (the '80s) by the Canadian Recording Industry Association.

"That did mean something," Peart says. "That was like contributing to the longevity and a body of work and that was special to us, definitely."

The group's single Where's My Thing was up for a Grammy Award last month in the best rock instrumental category but lost out to Eric Johnson's Cliffs of Dover.

Ironically, Johnson backed up Rush on the first part of the U.S. portion of the tour.

"We were glad for him," Peart says. "He's a lovely guy. We had no



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problem with that. He needs the attention more than we do."

Peart has a point.

Roll The Bones — Rush's 18th album — has sold more than 100,000 copies in Canada and close to one million copies in the United States. It also debuted at No. 3 on Billboard's Top Album Chart, the highest showing ever since the band's 1981 release Moving Pictures.

The latest record has a more stripped-down sound for Rush,

whose smart, progressive music has sometimes been criticized for being too busy and convoluted. There's even a brief rap section on the title cut.

"We thought of getting a real rapper in to do it or John Cleese to do a satire version of it," Peart says. "(But) on record, comedy dies fast."

In the end, Lee's trademark high voice was processed to sound almost Darth Vader-like.

English producer Rupert Hine, who has worked with The Fixx, Stevie Nicks and co-produced Rush's 1989 release Presto, was once again in the studio for Roll The Bones.

Peart says the experience revitalized the band.

"We do feel a new sense of longevity. Just the realization that we don't ever need any other band or any other people. The three of us are so fulfilled by this partnership — we're able to do everything we want."

Fiddler sets himself apart from others

□ Produces first cassette album at age 13

CHARLOTTETOWN (CP) — Richard Wood is a lot like most 13-year-old teenagers.

He attends Grade 8 at a nearby junior high school, he plays street hockey with his friends, he follows the fortunes of his favorite NHL team and he listens to rap music.

But he has another interest that's a little less common in people his age — old-time fiddle music.

And over the past few years, he has taken that interest and combined it with his own talent to become one of the best young fiddlers and step dancers in Canada.

He has won trophies and medals in competitions as far away as New York, he regularly performs across eastern Canada and he recently released his first cassette of fiddle tunes called Cutting the Bow.

Richard, who now lives in Hillsborough Village, just outside Charlottetown, got involved in old-time music seven years ago when his family was living in New Brunswick.

"I took lessons there from a lady named Marlene Weatherby. My parents always liked dancing and fiddling and one time they asked me if I would like to try dancing," he said. "There were not too many boys in dancing at the time, and there aren't too many now, but they asked me if I'd like to join it, so I tried it."

"And after about the first three weeks, the teacher took my parents aside and told them I should stay with it because I have potential. That's how I got into it, and it just went on from there."

When he came to the Island he began taking lessons from Libbe Hubley in Kensington. And as he gained some experience, he began entering and winning step dancing competitions across the Maritimes.

"I entered lots of competitions, I don't really know how many. Most of them were on P.E.I., but I also won off the Island." Richard got

into fiddling almost the same way he started stepdancing. One day, his parents asked him if he wanted to try the fiddle.

"I was 11 when I first picked it up. It is quite a difficult instrument to learn to play because it's using both hands, and it takes a lot of practice, really a lot of practice to get the notes." It also takes a long time to learn the thousands of different tunes in all different styles.

"I play mostly Cape Breton or Scottish style fiddling which has a lot of cuts and twirls."

Richard took lessons at first from Katherine Dau Schmidt, a well-known instructor in the Charlottetown area. But after the first year, she told him he should move on to another teacher because he was coming along so well.

Now he plays with a group called the Queens County Fiddlers.

As his talents in fiddling and dancing became known, Richard began receiving invitations to perform.

He even appeared twice on the popular television series Up Home Tonight.

"It was a really good experience; you get to work with all the stage people," he says. "The first time I went on, I was a little nervous with the big TV experience, but there was no problem with the second time." Richard got the idea for his tape from people who often approached him after concerts asking if he had any kind of recording to sell. The more he heard the question, the more he decided he should make one. So he started practising tunes.

Last November, he got the money together and spent a day in a studio in New Glasgow, N.S. recording the tape.

A week later he returned to do the final mixing.

"That first day took about six or seven hours. I was quite pleased, because we didn't have to do too many sets over again. There was just the odd one we had to do over and over until we got it right."

MUSIC NOTES

Singer uses unity theme

OTTAWA (CP) — The federal government could take a few lessons from Maritime singer-songwriter Lennie Gallant who has his own ways of helping to keep the country together.

Gallant, 36, was born to an Acadian family in Rustico, P.E.I. French was the first language of his grandparents, but his parents spoke only English. It took time, but Gallant now is bilingual and sings and writes in both languages.

One of his songs — Destination — written as he travelled by train along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, addresses the French-English issue. It is performed on a bodhran, a Celtic hand drum, to create the sound of a train.

Gallant says the message got the best response at every performance, no matter what language the audience spoke.

WINNIPEG (CP) — Grade 12 students Monika Vosolsobe and Tricia Isfeld really wanted good seats for a May 17 Metallica concert — enough to camp out for almost one week on the steps of the Winnipeg Arena.

"It's like a dream, we were so excited, we were dancing around after (buying the tickets)," Vosolsobe said.

"We paid the lady an extra \$5. We told her to keep it. We were just delirious."

The pair braved the elements in a flimsy two-person tent using sleeping bags, scarves, ski pants and candles to stay warm as temperatures hovered around -15 some nights.

They were the first in line when it came time to plunk down their \$24.75 for each front-row seat.

"I won't skip school any more," Vosolsobe promised her parents and teachers.

WINNIPEG (CP) — Mark Knopfler can remember the early days of Dire Straits when they used to fit all their gear into one car.

"And now I come to the shows and there's 10 trucks lined up outside the hall," he said. "Sometimes I sort of wonder what's in all those things."

"I think of the early days sometimes. We used to get all the gear in one little car," said Knopfler.