

Grapevine

Neil Peart on Rush and R30

Boston, Mass: Neil Peart, one of the most proficient drummers and articulate lyricists in rock history, generally prefers to let his bandmates — and more significantly, his music — do all the talking. For the release of the historic double DVD/CD *Rush R30*, Peart has taken some time to look back at what he, vocalist and bassist Geddy Lee, and guitarist Alex Lifeson, have accomplished over the past 30 years.

When you started the band 30-plus years ago, did you ever imagine you'd reach the heights you have?

Neil Peart: When I joined Rush, in August of 1974, we were already entering into "Fairy Tale Land." The band had just signed a U.S. record deal, and it included an advance to buy all new equipment. I'll never forget how exciting it was to walk into a music store in downtown Toronto and buy our "dream gear." While Alex and Geddy were looking at Gibson guitars, Rickenbacker basses, and Marshall amps, I was picking out a set of chrome Slingerland drums. Driving away from there with all those treasures in the back of our truck was already a dream come true.

Do you remember your first concert?

Two weeks after I joined, we played our first show together in Pittsburgh, in front of about 11,000 people, then continued around the U.S., opening for bigger bands, playing club dates on our own and even appearing on a few television shows. Eventually that first tour took us all around the United States and Canada, and that was pretty exciting too. Those were heady times, no question, and we were certainly fully engaged "in the moment." It's safe to say we weren't thinking too much about the future. A song we wrote around that time — while riding in a rental car somewhere south of St. Louis — was called "Making Memories" and sums up our state of mind pretty well: "You know we're having good days/And we hope they're gonna last/Our future still looks brighter than our past."

What were your goals in the beginning? How do they differ from your goals today?

My earliest goals were really just about playing drums — getting better, joining a band, playing at the local roller rink or teen dance. My goals expanded as my life did, and eventually I wanted to learn more about what drummer Bill Bruford once called



Courtesy of Atlantic/by Andrew MacNaughtan

Rush, from left: Geddy Lee, Neil Peart, and Alex Lifeson.

"Life beyond the cymbals." I started reading a lot, fiction and nonfiction, catching up on the education I had more or less "dodged" during my teenage obsession with drums and rock music. Later, I got interested in outdoor activities like cross-country skiing and cycling, and those activities incorporated goals of their own — traveling farther, building stamina and new experiences and seeking out fresh adventures.

What was it like to view the footage for the second DVD of Rush R30? Did it take you back to a bygone era?

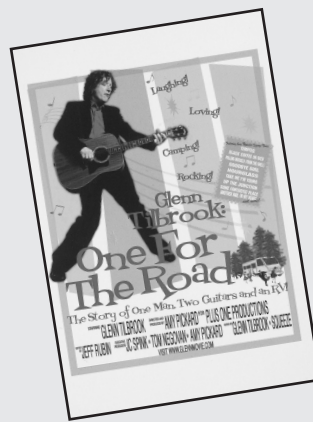
What that old footage does is make us laugh, really, at how we looked back then and smile with a certain fond appreciation for our youthful earnestness and energy. We had a lot to learn — but we were learning it!

What do you think you have learned since the early days? How have you changed as a band?

We have learned so much it's hard to begin to quantify it. But if anyone hasn't learned a whole bunch in 30 years, they haven't been paying attention. From the band's point of view, we certainly worked on our musicianship first, then — armed with that increased facility and confidence in our individual instruments — expanded into paying more attention to songwriting, arranging and production.

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GRAPELEAVES



News & notes: In 1985, Michael Jackson went on a music-buying spree, purchasing the publishing rights to thousands of songs, including more than 200 Beatles songs. Now the pop singer's stake (co-owned with Sony) in the back catalog is being threatened if he fails to come up with \$200 million in payments on loans, including those used for the original catalog purchase. If Jackson defaults on the loan, the New York private equity fund Fortress Investment Group could seize Jackson's share of the music rights. Jackson purchased the publishing rights to the songs, which also include Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind," for \$48 million; today the rights are valued at \$500 million... Beginning in March, Dylan will make his debut as a DJ and radio show host when he takes the reigns for a weekly one-hour show on XM Satellite Radio's Deep Tracks channel. The show will feature music selected by Dylan and his commentary; he will also interview guests and answer subscribers' e-mail questions... Former Jethro Tull drummer Mark Craney (53) died Nov. 26 after years of battling a kidney ailment. Craney was a member of Tull from 1980-81 and played on the band's 1980 release, *A*, and toured with them in 1981. Craney's career includes playing with Jean-Luc Ponty, Tommy Bolin, Mark-Almond Band, Gino Vanelli, Eddie Jobson, Jeff Beck, The Tower Of Power, and Eric Burdon.

On the bookshelf: Dick Weissman's *Which Side Are You On? An Inside History Of The Folk Music Revival In America* (Continuum, ISBN: 0-8264-1698-5) examines legends in the folk field including Neil and Alan Lomax, Harry Smith, Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly, Pete Seeger, Dave Van Ronk, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Joni Mitchell as well as newer artists such as Ani DiFranco and Nickel Creek to determine their place in the folk revival. Weissman charts a course from early folklorists and folk-song collectors through the folk-pop revival of the 1950s and '60s to the '70s and the age of the singer/songwriter up to today; he also speculates on where folk music will be in the future.

For couch potatoes: In the 1980s, the pop group Squeeze and its songwriting team of Glenn Tilbrook and Chris

Difford were drawing comparisons with John Lennon and Paul McCartney for their sharp, provocative tunes. At the height of the band's success, Squeeze were touring the world, traveling first class and even selling out Madison Square Garden twice. Fast-forward to 2004, and we find Tilbrook traveling the United States, playing intimate solo shows and reconnecting with a core group of fans. His life and times on the road are captured in a wonderful DVD *Glenn Tilbrook: One For The Road — The Story Of One Man, Two Guitars And An RV!* (Image Entertainment). As Tilbrook takes to the road, we're treated to a behind-the-scenes look, compliments of longtime fan Amy Pickard, that blows the lid off any glamour associated with the rock-star life. Instead, Tilbrook is seen dealing with engine problems, cramped dressing rooms, cooking breakfast on a camp stove, playing to appreciative fans and generally having a good time living a somewhat normal life... **Fates Warning**, *Live In Athens* (InsideOut), captures the band's complete Feb. 20, 2005, show in Athens, Greece. It includes tracks "Life In Still Water," "Monument," "Still Remains" and "Nothing Left To Say" as well as bonus rehearsal and soundcheck footage; **Toyah**, *Wild Essence — Live In The 21st Century* (Cherry Red), is the first DVD release of the multitalented singer. The disc features a concert performance from Wolverhampton, England, during her 2005 tour. The 16-song set includes "Thunder In The Mountains," "I Want To Be Free" and "Brave New World," along with four promo videos. Other new DVD releases include *Too Hot To Handle*, *The Story Of UFO* (1969-1993) (Music Video Distributors) and **Robin Trower**, *Living Out Of Time* (Inakustik).

For analog kids: Byrds fans will have much to sing about when Sundazed re-releases five Byrds albums in their original mono formats, cut from the original Columbia Records analog mono masters. *Mr. Tambourine Man*, *Turn! Turn!* (*To Everything There Is A Season*), *Fifth Dimension*, *Younger Than Yesterday* and *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* will be released Jan. 24, making them available for the first time in this format in more than 35 years. Each album will also feature complete, restored artwork.

— Todd Whitesel