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## Peart reveals literary inspirations behind Rush album

By [PAUL CANTIN <mailto:pcantin@canoe.ca>](mailto:pcantin@canoe.ca) -- JAM! Showbiz

Reclusive Rush drummer Neil Peart says writers such as Edward Abbey, Walt Whitman and Thomas Wolfe influenced his lyrics for the group's new album, "Vapor Trails."

In an unusual move, Peart issued his own statement describing the making of the new album, the group's first studio effort since 1996's "Test For Echo." Peart, who has not given any interviews in connection with the release of the new record, joked in the statement that the band initially fantasized about an unorthodox advertising campaign to herald Rush's return.

"Knowing that our music is nothing if not idiosyncratic, and doesn't really cater to popular 'taste,' we also envisioned advertising slogans along the lines of, 'If you hated them before, you'll really hate them now!' Or, 'And now -- more of everything you always hated about Rush!'"

"But of course, like everyone, we do hope people will enjoy our work, and that our shared enthusiasm, energy, and love for what we do communicates itself to the listener. When you set yourself on fire and aim for the sky, you hope to leave behind some sparks of heat and light ... Like a vapor trail."

In the three-page statement, issued by Universal Music Canada, Peart said that unlike other Rush albums, no strong theme emerged to unify "Vapor Trails."

"Lyrically, no overall concept emerged, but I can trace some interesting sources for particular lines," he said.

He said [Walt Whitman <http://www.liglobal.com/walt/poetry.shtml>](http://www.liglobal.com/walt/poetry.shtml) ([www.liglobal.com/walt/poetry.shtml](http://www.liglobal.com/walt/poetry.shtml)) influenced the song "Out Of The Cradle," while [Thomas Wolfe <http://www.thomaswolfe.org>](http://www.thomaswolfe.org) ([www.thomaswolfe.org](http://www.thomaswolfe.org)) inspired "How It Is" and "Ceiling Unlimited."

"Wolfe's title 'Of Time And The River' and looking at a map of the Mississippi Delta suggested the 'winding like an ancient river' lines," Peart said.

"'Ceiling Unlimited' also offers a playful take on Oscar Wilde's reversal of the Victorian lament, 'drink is the curse of the working class,' while Joseph Conrad's 'Victory' gave the 'secret touch on the heart' line." (See [www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde/index.html](http://www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde/index.html) [<http://www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde/index.html>](http://www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde/index.html) and <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/conrad> [<http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/conrad>](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/conrad) respectively).

[W.H. Auden <http://audensociety.org>](http://audensociety.org) ([audensociety.org](http://audensociety.org)) and Edward Abbey's "[Black Sun <http://abbeyweb.net/books/ea/black\\_sun.html>](http://abbeyweb.net/books/ea/black_sun.html)"

([abbeyweb.net/books/ea/black\\_sun.html](http://abbeyweb.net/books/ea/black_sun.html)) influenced parts of the song "Vapor Trail," Peart said.

Both "Nocturne" and "Secret Touch" were inspired by an article in the Utne Reader called "What Do Dreams Want."

"I was also struck by a psychologist's approach to analysis and dream interpretation, 'without memory or desire,' he said.

Author A.J. Cronin's 1935 novel title "The Stars Look Down" "seemed to express a fitting view of an uncaring universe," Peart commented. But he took some inspiration from paintings, as well.

Guitarist Alex Lifeson previously told JAM! Music that "Peaceable Kingdom" was originally intended as an instrumental piece, but after the Sept. 11 attacks in New York, it morphed into a meditation on the attacks.

Peart adds that the 19th century Quaker folk artist [Edward Hicks](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/hicks_edward.html) ([http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/hicks\\_edward.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/hicks_edward.html)) "painted no less than 60 versions of the same biblical scene, 'Peaceable Kingdom,' and the tarot card 'The Tower' seemed a chilling reflection of the events of September 11, 2001." (A number of tarot cards are used to illustrate the lyrics on "Vapor Trails.")

When it came to finding a title for the album, Peart said the decision was straightforward.

"A unifying theme sometimes appears in the collected songs and suggests an overall title, like 'Counterparts' or 'Power Windows'; other times a particular song seems emblematic, like 'Test For Echo' or 'Roll The Bones.' Neither approach seemed right this time, so we went with the song title we liked the best, 'Vapor Trail,' and made it plural to refer to all the songs."

Rush's tour in support of "Vapor Trails" kicks off June 28 in Hartford, CT. They play their hometown of Toronto on July 17.