

Interview with Geddy Lee

An interview in 3 parts

KDKB's Tim & Mark interview with Geddy Lee
4/10/02 Phoenix, AZ

T&M: Good morning Geddy, how you doing?

Geddy: Good morning Tim & Mark, how's everything in Phoenix?

T&M: Great, now did you know that Jason Newsted was such a huge fan of yours?

Geddy: No, I did not know that.

T&M: He really was, physically, "Oh my God", wish I could hang around and talk to him, but he had some other commitments, but ah, he did want us to pass along his best and to tell you that he is a huge fan of your work and has been for a long time.

Geddy: Well I certainly appreciate that.

T&M: You've heard of his band right?

Geddy: Yeah, I have

Laughter

T&M: Hey, you got Vapor Trails out, the first all new material album in five years. Why did it take so long, I guess we should ask you that right off the bat.

Geddy: Well there was a lot of obvious, uh, there was some personal tragedies in the life of Neil. He lost his wife and daughter, very tragically in 97 & 98. You know it took a long time for him to get his life back on track really and in the meantime we were just keeping ourselves occupied and trying to help him as friends and trying to keep ourselves together and make sure that he was able to survive this terrible blow. So it took him quite a while until he felt he needed to get back to work. So that was really the reason for the lay-off.

T&M: Did you get the feeling as a person, that was something he needed to do, as you say?

Geddy: Well, you know it's very hard to put yourself in the place of someone that has had those kind of things happen to them. Their devastating and you know he had to rebuild his life and I always felt that there is no better cure than staying active. And I knew it was a matter of time before he would realize that putting his energy back into work would be a healing process in and of itself. So, and I'm happy to say that's what I think occurred. We were happy that he was ready to work again and that he was ready to move on.

T&M: The new album Vapor Trails are there songs, you know Neils your lyricsist, are there songs relating to that on the album.

Geddy: Certainly. You know there's a lot of music on this album, there are a lot of lyrics that, some are personal some are more universal, but there's definitely three

or four songs that he's going out on a limb and expressing, as best he can, some of the things that he had gone through and some of the ways that he has tried to come back the land of the living so to speak.

T&M: Right, now why is it, do you think with a band like Rush, you guys you're a band can really afford to take 5 years off and I think, I know you don't want to take it for granted, when you come back, I think you probably realize that the albums probably going to go gold and the concert crowds are going to be there.

Geddy: Well your right we don't like to take it for granted and don't like to think that way. I like to think that we have to earn anything that we get. But we've been fortunate enough to know that there are a lot of fans out there that have been supportive and quite frankly I don't know if a band like us could exist without knowing that there was some support out there. It enables us to have confidence the experiment that we do in the studio and it enables us to push ourselves with some sort of knowledge that our fans expect us to do something new everytime. So that's instrumental in keeping the spirit of the band moving.

T&M: Yeah I don't think it's a lot of bands that could get away with a song like The Necromancer on an early album. *laughter* You've done some wild stuff over the years and your right the fans really for whatever reason theres a huge connection there and it's obvious. I saw you on the last tour at America West Arena and you did the whole 2112 thing and the whole kick line thing from the crowd and the Hey from the crowd, there's a huge connection there.

Geddy: Yeah, their amazing. You know bands can pretend that they can't, they can live without their fans and they can pretend this. But the bottom line is they create an atmosphere of acceptability for you and that gives you confidence and makes you want to continue. They are a reason for our longevity for sure.

T&M: You know in that perfect rock'n'roll show world you guys feed off each other and the crowd feeds off you and you feed off the crowd.

Geddy: Yeah, absolutely.

T&M: I know that you do have a North America tour planned and I don't want to ask you for a date cause I'm sure that's not set yet but will you guys be coming to Phoenix? Can you guarentee that?

Geddy: I'm pretty sure that we will be yeah.

T&M: That's great. I was gonna say the lat time you were here I ran into Randy Johnson of the Diamondbacks in the hallway and he wasn't a Diamondback back yet but are you familiar with any celebrities that are huge fans of yours have you met people at you shows that you like wow that guy is a fan of mine?

Geddy: Oh yeah. It happens from time to time. Randy's a friend of mine as a matter of fact, I've been lucky to meet a lot of ahteletes that are rock fans and we bump into each other cause we both live on the road so to speak but yeah it's always nice to know that somebody you admire in some way or another admires you right back.

T&M: How bout aside from Randy Johnson can you come up with some examples.

Geddy: Well, Mark Langston has been a good friend of mine for many years and he's a huge fan and way back in the 80's Warren Cremarty (no idea on spelling) played for the Expos, you remember him and Brin Smith who pitched for the Expos and then he pitched

for the Cardinals we're all still good friends, we still call each other and there's a bunch of guys Chuck Finley sadly who's been in the press to much lately (LMAO).

T&M: Yeah, we've been talking a little bit about that.

Geddy: But, there are a number of people that we bump into, you know, it's great. We keep saying we're waiting for a Rush fan in the White House. It could happen.

I know they're getting old enough now.

T&M: And now you know you could add Jason Newsted to the list because he is a huge fan of your work as well the bass player from Metallica, formerly from Metallica now from EchoBrain.

Hey, I wanted to talk about Vapor Trails for just a second.

And just looking at the titles alone, a few really stood out that I was curious about.

Ghost Rider and Freeze (Part 4 of Fear).

The titles of those tunes alone are kind of scaring me.

What are those about?

Geddy: Well, Ghost Rider is very personal song about Neil and one of the ways he dealt with his aftermath of his tragedy. He spent a couple of years basically on his own travelling by motorcycle around North America. And that was kind of a two fold thing. It was a healing journey for him and it was a bit of a flight from reality for him. That song is about that. I'm really happy the way that one turned out because I knew that it was personal for Neil and I really want it to make it great for him. And Freeze is a bit of a in a way it's a kind of quintessential Rush because absolutely insanely arranged and frenetically played. And it deals with inner fear and how we deal with fear and how we deal with fear in the aftermath of something striking that happens to you so it's a pretty interesting tune.

T&M: So I shouldn't be afraid of track number 12?

Geddy: No, don't be afraid of it.

T&M: OK...laughter, lets talk about OLV which we're going to play here in a little bit at KDKB.

Why did you guys choose that one as the first single?

Geddy: There's something about the statement of it that's very positive to me. To me there's something about us even existing still, it feels like a victory. It just felt like a positive statement that we needed to make coming back together after all that has gone down.

T&M: When you guys come out with a new album and it gets down to the brass tax of hey what's the single going to be? Is there a lot of back and forth on that or do you usually just like pretty much agree right of the bat of what the first single is?

Geddy: Usually the first one is kind of clear with a band like us. It's usually one track that just seems like the opener and Victory was one of the easiest decisions we had to make in that regard.

T&M: Hey Geddy when you tour again are you going to have the Three Stooges cutout on the stage?

Geddy: We've got new surprises for you.

T&M: That's in your den right now, right.

Geddy: I think it's in Alex's living room right now, for sure.

T&M: It's going to be a Three Musketeers theme this time around. I wanted to ask on behalf of a fan that had e-mailed me, a big fan of solo projects, your solo project and I know you just got the new album out and you got the tour planned so you may not be thinking this way. Any projects or prospects for more solo stuff in the future from you or any of the guys?

Geddy: Certainly, I had such a great time making that record and working with different people that I'm sure that sooner or later I'll get back at that. I'd definitely like to make another solo record at some point.

T&M: What is the strangest place you have ever heard one of your songs or have been recognized?

Geddy: Well you know that's easy, a couple of years ago my wife and I were hiking in the far reaches of Argentina in Patagonia where the average population is about half a person per square mile and I was in this little town called Califate (spelling?) and out of the blue this guy came up to me and was just an incredible fan and he had a little tiny bar in this little town and he kind of heard that I was in town somehow and it was 7:00 in the morning and we were just getting on the bus to head out for one of these hiking excursions and then he was, he had been up all night having a drink and wanted to get my picture. That was about the most remote instant I could think of.

T&M: You know that's got to be the pride of that bar though, that picture of him and you on that wall there in the bar that's the pride right there. You know you're huge in Patagonia.

Geddy: All six people there love us.

interview concludes with thank you's and the playing of OLV.