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Posted on Mon, Jul. 01, 2002

Rush's long-running act hits all the right notes

Second stop of highly anticipated national tour for the Canadian progressive hard-rock trio is a big winner at

Montage Mountain.

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SCRANTON - Six years after its previous studio album and tour, more than 25 years since playing Northeast Pennsylvania and 34 years since forming in a Toronto high school, Rush showed 12,000 fans at Montage Mountain Amphitheater Saturday night what much of the rock world has known for decades: the Canadian progressive hard-rock trio is simply one of the premier acts to ever grace a concert stage.

On the second night of its long-awaited national tour supporting the May release of the album "Vapor Trails," Geddy Lee (vocals, bass, keyboards), Alex Lifeson (guitar, backup vocals) and Neil Peart (drums, percussion) took the stage at about 7:40 p.m. to the "Three Stooges" theme and unleashed the venue-shaking opening chord of "Tom Sawyer," the band's biggest hit and the lead track from 1981's "Moving Pictures."

Opening with its biggest hit was a bold move and a sign of things to come, with Rush seemingly getting its commercial breakthrough song out of the way early in the show to make room for some obscure tunes from its massive catalog of 18 studio albums, all of which have gone gold or platinum (besides the recently released "Vapor Trails," which will likely reach that status).

The risk paid huge dividends on songs such as "The Pass," a track from 1989's "Presto" that Lee introduced as "one of our favorite songs that we haven't played in a long time." The fact that the little-known song and the instrumental "YYZ" drew some of the first set's biggest audience responses proved that Rush's rabid fans are just as dedicated and knowledgeable as the band itself.

Throughout the night, a huge, rectangular screen behind the trio displayed live images of the band, computer animation and video clips. Dizzying lights tastefully accented the complex music, and even lasers and some pyrotechnics were deployed. Lee often hopped around while plucking his bass, Lifeson strolled the stage making outlandish gestures and goofy faces during his loud, crunching chords and scorching solos while Peart, nicknamed "The Professor" by fans, remained stoic and straight-faced while assaulting his massive drum kit.

After an intermission, the second set featured some new songs from "Vapor Trails," including the radio singles "One Little Victory" and "Secret Touch" as well as Peart's lengthy, elaborate, well-received drum solo.

"Overture" and "Temples of Syrinx" from 1976's "2112" found the band honoring its heavy, progressive, conceptual roots, as did the instrumental tour de force "La Villa Strangiato," during which a fan jumped

on stage and got close to Lee and Lifeson before he was pulled off by security.

"The Spirit of Radio" closed the second set three hours after the show's opening. Encores followed, with three unexpected, nearly 30-year-old gems: "By-Tor & The Snow Dog," "Cygnus X-1," and the hard-rocking "Working Man" from Rush's self-titled 1974 debut album.

A perfect ending to what even the most obsessed, demanding Rush fan would likely agree was a perfect show.

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