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Rush busy, not hurried

By JASON MACNEIL, TORONTO SUN

Like his other two bandmates, Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson is off the road this year after the successful 2002 Vapor Trails world tour. Going by his recent work schedule though, he may need to go back on tour to get some down time. The group, performing under AC/DC and the Rolling Stones tomorrow at Downsview Park, will release *Rush In Rio* in September, a two-DVD set recorded on the band's last night of the 2002 world tour.

"As it turns out we've been putting this DVD together. I've been in the studio with the mixing portion of it for the last seven weeks; we still have another couple of weeks to go on it," a weary Lifeson says. "Geddy has been in the video part and Neil was involved in the earlier stages of the assembly.

"I'll be honest with you, I've been in the studio from noon until 4 a.m. every day, so nothing is going to bump up the pace ... It's not just a mix of the audio of the show, it's a lot of other things that are included in the whole thing. It's the stereo mix and the 5.1 mix and they are separate issues. So the workload has been intense."

Lifeson says the Rio concert, recorded before 60,000 in Rio de Janeiro, was a one-shot deal.

"We really lucked out," he says. "The truck, the sound truck, it was like a bread van with two-by-fours screwed into the ceiling and floor with all of our gear literally screwed into all these two-by-fours. I mean it's a miracle that this thing came about ... It all worked out and we're really proud of it."

Lifeson, bassist and singer Geddy Lee and drummer Neil Peart, aware of the situation in Toronto, had heard rumours about a possible concert to boost the city's sagging tourism and hospitality sector. But there was nothing confirmed.

Lifeson says the band, known for its meticulous attention to musical details, has prepared well for its set.

"For a thirty-minute set, which is just a warm-up for us, we're planning on almost two weeks worth of preparation and rehearsal," Lifeson says. "We are so organized. We have two Virgos in the band, which makes us a little bit anal about how we organize things. These one-off things we don't do very often, and I think it's good that we do it. It's good for us as musicians and as a band to throw ourselves in at the last minute."

According to Lifeson, the Vapor Trails tour was the band's most successful from a musical, management and promotions standpoint. He also says that his appreciation for playing live has changed.

"In the early days there was excitement that you just can't recapture or describe. It was really, really exciting to be playing for excited audiences," he says. "They were seeing you for the first time and you could feel that buzz happening. Those were very heady days.

"Now it's a whole different thing. There's a whole different maturity, there's a confidence in your performance and the way you do things. Although different it's equally as satisfying."

Aside from tomorrow's show, the completion of the DVD and a triple live album released at the same time, Rush will not do anything else this year.

Lifeson says that although it's still too early to tell, the band plans on making 2004 a work year, whether in the studio working on a new album or back out on tour. A decision will be made in September.

"We never really do feel that pressure (to make another album)," Lifeson says. "When I look around at all these bands that have come and gone and the ones that are around, and the kind of restrictions placed on how they do things, we're lucky. We've always done things the way we wanted to do them and the way we thought best."