

When Rush vocalist and bassist Geddy Lee sat down to look at the historical video clips assembled for the second DVD of the band's 30th anniversary DVD release, *Rush: R30*, he was amazed, bemused and even a little bit embarrassed. "I wish somebody had told me in the '70s that my glasses were horrible," he said after watching some vintage interview and performance footage. "They were eating my face completely."

We recently sat down with Lee to talk about *Rush R:30*, the balance between technical proficiency and emotional resonance, remaining valid in changing times and the most loyal fans in rock.

UGO: The first disc of *R30* is around two hours long and captures a show you did in Frankfurt, Germany on September 24, 2004. What was special about that gig?

GEDDY LEE: All the shows in Europe on the last tour felt pretty special, because we hadn't been to many of those cities in between 10 and 20 years. So, for every concert there was a gathering of people from across Europe. I remember in Frankfurt there were even people from Japan. It was an interesting opportunity for us to say thank you to the people that we don't get access to as often as we probably should. And that spirit in the venue really fired us up.

UGO: How does the DVD differ from the one you released in 2003, *Rush in Rio*?



GEDDY: It's quite a different take on our show. *Rush in Rio* was a moment in the sense that we were in a new culture at a very large venue in a very unusual and captivating atmosphere and working with gear that we just picked up so that we could get some film and record it. It was not what we would call state of the art. It was about the vibe. This performance from Frankfurt, Germany was an attempt to capture the show in a more high tech way using high def cameras and a recording truck and much more attention to detail. So we focused more on the show, less of the venue, less on the crowd. Whereas Rio is kind of this extravaganza. We brought the picture in a little bit to get more into the songs and the playing and the colors of the show and it turned out quite different. It's quite good. I'm very pleased with the way it came out and I think fans will find it a very interesting contrast to *Rush in Rio*.

UGO: The set includes some of the cover songs you recorded for the 2004 EP *Feedback*. Were those fun to perform onstage?

GEDDY: They were a blast. I love playing those songs live. It was just us being in cover bands for a few minutes. It was really a nice moment for us onstage, and I think the fans enjoyed it as well.

UGO: The second DVD on *R30* is a comprehensive retrospective of your career. Is it a documentary?



GEDDY: No, it's a collection of odd bits from the past going all the way back to 1974. There's television appearances, videos, a strange collection of obscure songs we put on film for some reason or another. And it's really funny to look back from then to now.

UGO: What are some of the live clips?

GEDDY: Various songs from "Finding My Way" through "La Villa Strangiato." One of the bits and pieces is a film of us doing "Xanadu" with our regalia of the day -- absurdly prophetic robes and all.

UGO: Was it strange to watch the old interviews?

GEDDY: It's just really weird to look at yourself when you're 21 and 22 doing interviews and thinking that you're so smart and so complete already as a young pup, and then seeing how you've changed over the years. And there are snippets of us in various states of hair and clothing. You kind of watch us grow up on film. Some of it is really funny to look at and some of it is painful to look at.

UGO: How have you managed to stay together for 30 years?

GEDDY: It's hard to answer. Luck is part of the answer, and that luck has presented itself in the fact that we've been lucky to have the kind of personalities that accommodate each other. We like each other and it just works between the three of us and we all have equal say in everything; we're one of the smallest democracies working today. Also, we always bring a very healthy sense of humor to whatever we do. And that tempers the difficulties and the serious side of things and keeps it a fun experience. Without the fun you just can't keep doing something for 30 years. The other thing is we've been fortunate that we have a sound that has found an audience and that audience has been so dedicated that they've created an atmosphere or a level of success that has enabled us to carry on.



UGO: What is it about your music that has engendered such loyalty from your fans?

GEDDY: It's hard to say specifically. There have been different periods of our lyrical and musical past that have touched these people in some profound way. It's given them some sort of comfort or inspiration or just hitting them at a time in life where they can relate to what's being discussed. And that has stayed with them and had enough of an impact that they've been curious to see us continue. Our crowd is amazing. They've invested their emotions in our music and they've invested their time and money into making sure that we understand that they want us to continue.



UGO: You have been very influential on many of today's more adventurous rock bands. Do you hear your sound in their music?

GEDDY: I don't hear our sound, but I get nuggets of some of our attitude from time to time. I was listening to Mars Volta the other day, and somebody told me they're big fans. There's times where the music is just really wild and they do rhythmic things that remind me of the way we used to think and still do from time to time about throwing riffs together. There's an adventurous spirit there that I would like to think was helped to grow through some stuff that we did at one point in our career.

UGO: In the 1970s, there were lots of amazing progressive rock bands that played very technically complex music. Was that what you were born from?

GEDDY: actually, we were influenced by all the great trios - Cream, Jimi Hendrix, the Who, in a sense were a trio, and even Zeppelin. Those were the first big rock bands that we wanted to emulate. And as our tastes got more obscure, we discovered more progressive rock based, bands like Yes, Van Der Graaf Generator and King Crimson, and we were very inspired by those bands. They made us want to make our music more interesting and more complex and we tried to blend that with our own personalities to see what we could come up with that was indisputably us. That took a while, but I think *2112* was the first record where we accomplished that and created a sound for ourselves.

UGO: You've always been considered musician's musicians. How do you manage to balance technicality with accessibility?

GEDDY: For many years our attitude was playing first and the playing is the highest priority and we'll structure songs in a way that provides an opportunity for us to play intricate stuff. And as we got older, that formula became limiting and we felt we weren't really learning how to get the most out of feel. There's this thing called "feel" that sometimes requires you not to play a million miles an hour. The purpose of that change is to get more emotional resonance out of your music. So, we started trying to make our music more melodious and have more emotional impact, but to still hang onto those technical things that we just loved doing. That's been the battle that we've raged internally. Trying to make our music grow and be more all encompassing, and at the same time not sacrificing the level of musicianship, is sometimes very hard.



UGO: The most dramatic shift in your career took place between the hard rockin' guitar style *Moving Pictures* and the poppier, more electronic album *Signals*. What triggered that?

GEDDY: I think we were just ready for an experiment and also there was the advent of new keyboard technology that I was really interested in. So, we decided we would try to make ourselves into a four-piece rather than a three-piece and *Signals* really represents that. It was an experiment that lasted for a number of years. I think we started rejecting that fourth person in the band right around the time we did the *Counterparts* record. That was the beginning of relearning how to be a trio.

UGO: What are the advantages of being a trio?

GEDDY: There's less sonic sludge that you have to try to cut your instrument through. We found that our records were starting to get very, very dense sonically and texturally. And they were starting to miss the clearer focus on bass, drums and guitar. I think that's what brought us back to a trio style of playing.

UGO: You are the lead vocalist but drummer Neil Peart writes all the lyrics. Is it strange to be the voice for his ideas?



GEDDY: It's a very happy collaboration. I can't sing something I don't have a feeling for and I can't put my heart and soul into a vocal performance if I don't really love what I'm singing. So, there's a lot of discussion and a lot of back and forth between us. He uses me as a sounding board and gives me complete license to

dissect his lyrics and use the parts I really respond to and disregard others. That's a wonderful advantage for me as a songwriter to know that if there's only four lines I like from a song he's written that I really can use those four lines. I can put them in the song and give them to him and he'll be happy to try to expand upon that and turn it into something else lyrically. He's a total pro to work with. He attaches very little ego to any of his lyrics. He constantly says, "I'm happy to have written it. I can't control what you guys respond to or what you want to use." He gets the joy in the writing of it.

UGO: Many veteran acts either stop recording new material or create half-hearted discs that don't feel very inspired. How have you continually managed to create relevant albums?

GEDDY: We don't ever want to be viewed as one of these bands that are just trading on our past. We never wanted to just come out in the summertime to sing our hits. We are always interested in making new music and getting better. There's still a great song out there that we have to write. There's still a great performance we have to capture. And we try to listen to what else is going on in

have to capture. And we try to listen to what else is going on in music. There's lots of talented people out there that are making really interesting noises and we want to absorb some of that because they've got something to teach us. So, we keep trying and fortunately we have an audience for that, so we keep experimenting.

UGO: Who are you inspired by today?

GEDDY: There are a lot of great players out there, still. I like the Foo Fighters, for example. I have a lot of respect for that style of pop rock that rages. I like what Radiohead's all about. They are really carrying on the tradition of progressive rock music. I love Bjork. I love her musicality and the way she looks at a song.

UGO: Have you started working on new material for your next album?

GEDDY: We're just at the stage now where we're circling the wagons and trying to figure out the best creative environment for ourselves, so that's gonna happen over the next three to six months.

UGO: What sorts of musical or lyrical ideas might you address?

GEDDY: One great thing about making a Rush record for me is we never know what the hell we're doing. It's really spontaneous and by the time we're finished we go, "Oh, that's what we're doing."

UGO: Will there be an *R40* or *R50* DVD?

GEDDY: Oh, man, who knows? But the longer the Stones keep going, the younger we feel.

