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Rush, R30—30th Anniversary World Tour. Anthem 6682520029 (Canada), Rounder DVZOE 1082 (US), Sanctuary SVEDF0216 (UK and Europe), 2005.

In 2005, the progressive/hard rock band Rush (consisting of bassist-singer Geddy Lee, guitarist Alex Lifeson, and drummer Neil Peart) marked its thirtieth anniversary by releasing *R30*, an elaborate “live-plus” DVD package. Earlier live projects from the band in the late 1990s and 2000s acknowledged an international fan community beyond its primary audiences in the United States and its native Canada, including followings in the UK, Japan, Brazil, and Germany. Together,

these projects also served as anthologies of the band's extensive output—eighteen studio albums from 1974 to 2004 (with a nineteenth studio album released on 1 May 2007)—and *R30* further includes such bonus materials as photos, souvenirs, band-member interviews, live song videos, and additional live and/or televised song performances.

Rush's thirtieth anniversary tour consisted of fifty-seven three-hour shows in 2004 in the United States, Canada, the UK, and continental Europe. Around the same time, the band released a tribute studio album of eight rock songs that its members had played as young musicians in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The tour presented live performances of four of those songs: the Who's "The Seeker," the Yardbirds' "Heart Full of Soul," Blue Cheer's version of "Summertime Blues," and Cream's version of "Crossroads." The tour shows also opened and closed with a pair of humorous TV-like video segments featuring veteran comedic actor Jerry Stiller. The cover songs and Stiller provided a broader accessibility to the context of Rush's music for concertgoers not already familiar with the band's better-known songs, such as "The Spirit of Radio," "Tom Sawyer," "Limelight," and "Roll the Bones." Because Rush concerts draw a combination of "hardcore" musician fans and casual observers, these elements were probably intended as added entertainment for its still evolving audience.

Disc 1 was recorded with fourteen high-definition cameras in wide-screen and in digital surround-sound at the 13,500-seat Festhalle in Frankfurt, Germany. The set's deluxe edition also includes two conventional audio CDs containing the same music. Rush's live performances generally conform to the album-oriented rock (AOR) tracks found on the original studio albums. Thus, apart from occasionally fashioning partial song medleys (such as the instrumental "R30 Overture," which is derived from the main riffs of six Rush songs from the 1970s), the band's performances contain little improvisation. Rush draws upon guitars and basses, numerous effects pedals, bass pedal instruments, synthesizer keyboards, triggered samples, and an extremely large drum and percussion array. The latter includes a revolving platform used to alter its downstage configuration, such as during Peart's drum solo, "Der Trommler" (The Drummer).

Rush concerts have long featured a variety of visual and lighting effects: the tour captured by *R30* incorporated spotlights, colored patterns, lasers, dry-ice "smoke," and audience sweeps. It also included many stage rear-screen projections: live and archival images of the three band members; images based on the band's album cover art (most by Hugh Syme); selected elements borrowed and/or updated from several of the band's music videos; computer-produced visual effects patterns; and a humorous mid-show animation featuring a Godzilla-like dragon and a trio of Rush bobble-heads. The concert video footage of *R30* works its way around these live elements by fashioning a complex visual interweave, shooting from a variety of positions and motions to accentuate onstage activities including solos, riffs, and fills, as well as the audience. This high level of motion and interactivity provides an active and exciting home alternative to the experience of an actual concert. *R30* comes with a booklet of credits and photos and, in the set's deluxe edition, a souvenir backstage pass as well as "autographed" guitar and bass picks.

Disc 2 compiles five band-member interviews, ranging from 1979 to 2002, that will prove inconsequential for anyone already familiar with Rush's non-mainstream arena rock, the band's "democracy of three" ideals, and its history of fostering a dedicated core audience that tolerates the band's experiments. The disc also includes a "live" video (actually synced-to-studio-recording) of a 1975 Rush song, two live performances from the mid-1970s US television show *Don Kirshner's Rock Concert*, four onstage live videos from ca. 1979, an early live sound check of "The Spirit of Radio," a pair of live song performances from major Canadian multi-artist events in 2003 and 2005, and some trivial "hidden" bonus materials (referred to as "Easter Eggs"). The interviews and performances from the 1970s usefully document that period's long hair styles, silk shirts unbuttoned to expose hairy chests, bell-bottoms, and even the occasional cape.

R30's book-like packaging is similar to the elaborate three-DVD special editions of the 2001–3 *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and likewise serves as a collector's item. Disc 1's video and audio elements appear to have been directed, produced, edited, and mixed with a considerable amount of care, and its interesting multimedia presentation is reasonably balanced, even for viewers who are not already fans of Rush's music. Apart from parts of the interviews, Disc 2 proves much less satisfying, largely because most of the staged song performances tend to be static compared to the elaborate live show presented on Disc 1. The set would thus have been improved considerably by including the eight additional songs Rush performed on its 2004 tour, even if it meant removing a few of the bonus items. Rush's distinctive approach to progressive/hard rock and the band's considerable attention to multimedia could prove useful for popular music or cultural studies courses that address how media elements can be integrated into the performance of popular music.

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