



Rush Bringing String Ensemble on Tour

By Gary Graff | June 18, 2012 5:10 PM EDT



With "Clockwork Angels," its first new album in five years, just out, Rush is planning a tour that will surprise many of the Canadian trio's fans.

"Our intention is to take strings out on the road," guitarist Alex Lifeson tells Billboard.com. Orchestrations, arranged by David Campbell, feature on several of "Clockwork Angels' " tracks, and Lifeson says Rush will employ a small string ensemble, likely eight to 10 pieces, to recreate those pieces and to be added to some of Rush's older material. "It's just something different for us, and I can't wait to hear what it sounds like."

Album Review: Rush, 'Clockwork Angels'

Lifeson says Campbell will be writing arrangements for the tour, which kicks off Sept. 7 in Manchester, N.H., and will likely appear at some of the shows as well. "Certainly in the beginning he'll be out for a bit," the guitarist says. "I think his intention is to use these musicians

he's been working with for a long time, who he trusts, and once they're settled in he doesn't have to be around all the time and he can come out whenever he feels like it."

Lifeson says the production is "still in a planning stage" but promises that "it's a while new show. It's new staging, new lighting, everything is new and fresh about it. I would say that it's an evolutionary extension of what the (2010-11) Time Machine Tour was, but we are definitely freshening it up and bringing and there'll be a lot of new video stuff going on." And, of course, Lifeson and his mates expect to dedicate a considerable amount of stage time to "Clockwork Angels," a concept album that will be followed by a novel co-written by drummer/lyricist Neil Peart and Kevin J. Anderson.

"The set list is quite fluid these days," Lifeson reports. "We're dropping and replacing songs constantly, and that's the way it always goes before we get into rehearsals. There's a great deal of pressure on us now to do the whole record, which we don't anticipate. I think our intention is probably to prepare the whole thing; whether we'll do it or not we're still not sure, especially on the first leg of the tour. There's still a lot of older stuff we want to do, and we've got some great songs lined up from the past. We'd be loathe to drop them to add more of 'Clockwork Angels,' at least on the first leg. It's always nice to switch up on the second leg and make it a little different."

Lifeson hasn't read the "Clockwork Angels" novel yet, but says Peart was recently in the studio to record an audio version of the book. "That is all coming together very quickly and it will definitely be done in time for the tour, if not shortly before," he notes. As for other "Clockwork Angels" adaptations, Lifeson cracks that "maybe if we can get Trey and Matt (Parker and Stone of 'South Park' and 'The Book of Mormon' fame) to do the musical we'd have some success with it. But, you know, we're focused on the tour right now. The album just came out. The book is very important to Neil, and that's his little baby. But certainly for the three of us the album has been the most important thing, and what happens and comes of it, we'll see. We're preparing for the tour, and right now that's what our focus is. It's been very, very busy in the Rush camp for the past couple of months."

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