

'We're going on the road soon, and once we finish the tour if everyone is feeling healthy and happy having worked that hard, we'll dive into the next project,' muses Lifeson. "I think everything's going to happen much quicker, and we'll get to the end result much faster.

"We're out of the routine that existed for 25 years, and now we're a little lost in a way. I think it's like a rebirth for us, and where it goes to from here I don't know. We're taking it a little bit at a time. You know, we've always been really close friends. Geddy and I have been friends since we were 13 years old. This has brought us together in such a way..."

The guitarist trails off, laughs, and then resumes. "You know, I was watching 'Spinal Tap' the other day and there's a scene where Nigel Tuffnel says ' We're so close, we're beyond brothers.' And I had to laugh because we've said that so many times, but it's really true. We are very close, it's great to work together, and that's a great part of our relationship, but above that we're friends. Neil lives in Los Angeles now, but Ged and I still live three minutes away from each other. And if we don't talk to each other every couple of days we get weird. We miss each other! And it's bizarre - to have known someone that long, to have been through so much together, you'd think we really wouldn't want to spend that much time together. But we're really lucky for it - we truly are best friends, and here we are almost fifty years old."

So then, perhaps the best is yet to come? That might be hard to imagine for those of us who've grown up with such benchmark moments as 2112 or Moving Pictures - and indeed, for Lifeson, the legacy of the band, when he does think about it, is both daunting and inspiring.

"I think this record has more in common with 2112 than any other record we've done," he reflects. "There's a passion on that record - it came at a time that was almost the end of us. There was flagging support from the record company, management was concerned as they were hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt at the time. The record was not very successful commercially, but we needed to make that record before we could make a 'Moving Pictures.'

"I think in the last ten years we've done good work, but not great work. And this is the first time that we've made a step towards getting to that point in our heads where we feel we're doing great work."