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**Excitement So Thick**

The scene was unlike one Rush had ever seen (up to that point). In November of 2002, Brazil played host to three of the biggest shows of their thirty-year career. Their highly successful Vapor Trails Tour wrapped with shows in Porto Alegre, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. It was on the final date that they filmed what was to become their most comprehensive video document of their live show. What better place to film than in a country that held a hard core group of rabid Rush fans.

Lighting Designer Howard Ungerleider, who runs [Production Design International](#) in Toronto, has worked with Rush since their first tour in 1974. He described the vibe of the show, "The atmosphere was amazing. There was electricity in the air. Brazil is an amazing place, it's just incredible. There's so much to see there and the people were so friendly and nice. It was just a really positive vibe. It was very, very exciting. Very electric, that's all I can describe it as."



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)  
 The trio at the NA tour closer in Manchester.

Long-time fan and Rush show globe-trotter Bill Banasiewicz had seen hundreds of Rush audiences, but was impressed by the sheer enthusiasm of the Rio crowd: "Upon arriving at the massive Maraccana Stadium, we entered a scene much like the Super Bowl and New Year's Eve all rolled into one. The crowd of people waiting in line for the general admission field turned and twisted for blocks and blocks like a giant serpent. Vendors were everywhere selling just about anything you could imagine, along with an impressive array of bootleg merchandise, which is not illegal in Brazil. Corner cafes and bars were packed with people who exerted an unrelentless enthusiasm. There was a big playoff soccer match slated for the stadium the next afternoon, and chants for the home Rio team would break out at a feverish pitch, with the whole bar singing their fight song in Portuguese. Helicopters buzzed overhead, filming the mass of humanity that was about to enter the stadium."

Brazil native Marcelo Bahia had been waiting for 10 years to see his favorite band so he gladly ventured across his country to see the shows in Porto Alegre and Sao Paulo. He would round out the week with the third and final show in his hometown of Rio and this particular show would turn out to be a very special one for him. His pent-up enthusiasm is not unlike many other fans as he details his entry to Maracana Stadium: "You couldn't help smiling when the gates opened, the first fans to get inside the stadium were shouting with joy, running and jumping with smiles on their faces. It seemed like everyone was finally reaching heaven!"

Marcelo's arrival at the venue around 3 p.m. and his dedication did not go unrewarded. Unlike the previous shows, the ground of the stadium was general admission standing, so Marcelo lucked into an ideal spot for watching a Rush show. He recounts, "I'll never forget the fraction of second that I finally got inside Maracanã, and looked at the stage. There was an empty space at the [barricade] in the right side, just where our friend Geddy Lee would be! Then I really started running, jumping and shouting – I couldn't believe my eyes. I was going to see one of the people that I most admire from about three metres away from me! I had spent endless nights with my bass trying to play like this guy. Even in my best dreams about seeing Rush live, it wasn't anything near this!"



[\[click images to enlarge\]](#)

Along with Marcelo, the stadium would hold over 40,000 fans who'd been waiting for years to see their musical heroes. Despite a lengthy career and playing for millions of fans throughout North America and Europe, Rush had not ventured south of the U.S. until 2002's Vapor Trails Tour. For most Brazilian fans they had grown accustomed to and resigned to the fact that Rush would most likely not play in their country so when three dates were announced to close the tour excitement grew. The band was aware that there was interest from promoters for shows in Brazil but what about the fans? Would they fill the stadiums? The band's questions were answered when fans turned out in record numbers.

"You're playing to 3 or 4 times more people than you normally play to. And the people were very passionate. They were passionate about Rush's music and they were so into the band. It was unbelievable. It freaked me out!" Ungerleider recalled. "They were really, really appreciative of Rush coming to Brazil and who would know that that's how popular Rush were. Rush didn't even know it themselves that they were that popular down there till they actually got there and saw it. And maybe it's the fact that they've never played there that created that sort of, want. But everyone was so happy and pleased and the reviews were rave reviews. It was all positive."



[\[click images to enlarge\]](#)

Live Animation Performer Jim Ellis agrees, "I think that everyone may have been a bit surprised at such a turn out and the extent of dedication that the fans had. People on the tour knew that Rush were popular in South America, but it was hard to pre-gauge the extent. The Brazil fans were many and were very ecstatic."

Ellis also commented on the mix of the crowd and how it differed from the North American shows, "Also in the States, Rush shows tend to primarily consist of people who have been into them since the '70s and '80s, but in Brazil, a large portion of the fans were teenagers and in their early 20's...and more women. All of the fans were absolutely ecstatic. The audience was yelling 'Hush Hush Hush,' because in Portuguese they pronounce their 'R's' like an 'H.'"

And what of that language barrier, as Rush lyrics tend to be a bit more intricate than your average run of the mill pop song. Banasiewicz describes it from his point of view, "The thing that I enjoy most about seeing Rush in non-English speaking countries is witnessing how the music transcends any and all barriers. In Brazil (as was the case in Japan in 1984) there may have been two or three people in our entire section who spoke anything other than Portuguese, yet these fans knew most of the English lyrics. In Rio, our section of the stadium was singing quite loud that night, and it was funny to listen to their take on the songs, because they would sing in a kind of broken English, where they would know every second or third word, but not every word."



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The crowd united not only with their fellow Brazilians but with the pockets of fans who made the trek to see Rush close out the tour from the U.S., Canada and abroad. Again Banasiewicz puts the atmosphere into words, "There was an instant camaraderie that was formed with the Brazilian fans just through sharing this experience. They were quite impressed that a couple of Americans had made the trek just to see Rush. We sang together, giving high-fives with big smiles on our faces. The music of Rush was able to bring us together and bond us as one. It was a beautiful experience."

Dani Dayrell, a Brazilian fan describes an "insane audience, releasing at one time all the energy locked during the last 28 years. The band looked at the audience's eyes and seemed unable to believe that so many people could rock and sing all the songs so loud at a Rush show. Fans looked and couldn't believe that the dream was real. You needed to look around at other eyes to confirm that the insanity wasn't individual."



[\[click images to enlarge\]](#)

The Brazil trip was not without it's technical and logistical challenges. For instance, the venues in Brazil were built as soccer stadiums and were not intended for large concerts and the equipment that comes along with a production the size of Rush's. The band was excited to bring the full production from the North American shows, but it wasn't an easy task. Ungerleider recalls some of the issues, "The shows in Rio were kind of nightmarish to do because they were in buildings that are basically soccer stadiums and not designed for a tractor trailer to enter the facility because when they were built they never thought there would be a need. So all the overhangs on the outsides of the buildings were only eight-feet high. Basically all of the equipment had to come off the

trucks a ¼ of a mile from where it was going to be set-up. It's was a long push up many ramps just to get in. There wasn't the convenience that we're used to in North America. Of course, couple that with it always wanting to rain while the equipment was being loaded-in or loaded-out as well. The load-outs were crazy because you're pushing this gear for a ¼ of a mile as opposed to a few feet normally, and in a limited amount of time. In one case the stadium also had their payroll office set-up for the 1,500 employees of the stadium where we were loading out, so there were all of the employees in security shirts turning in their badges and passes in the middle of load-out. It was pretty different, but it was great at the same time. You're coming to Brazil for the first time and selling 40-60,000 tickets per night. It was pretty amazing."

Ellis remembers the load-out for Rio being especially interesting, "It was hot, strip to your undies hot. It seriously stormed on the load-out at the end of the night. As soon as the show ended, a serious storm began with lightning and sheets of rain."

Known for an intense and elaborate stage and lighting design, Rush delivered the same show North American fans experienced to the Brazilian fans. Of course when filming for a live concert DVD there are adjustments and additions required to ensure the lighting will illuminate the band and crowd in different ways. Normally in an arena or amphitheatre the spotlights will be angled down towards the band, but for a video shoot that would produce too much shadowing around the eyes. In order to reduce this, the spotlights were moved to stage level to the side of the sound and lighting desk. Additionally, extra lighting was usually brought in to focus on the crowd to help illuminate the crowd shots. Ungerleider explains some of the additional equipment used in Rio, "We brought in a series of Synchronites, which are basically automated searchlights. We brought in a bunch of audience lighting outside of our normal show. And we coordinated that with Jeff Ravitz who is a lighting director who was in charge of the video audience lighting. So Jeff and I worked together to put the whole lighting package in. Jeff concentrated on the audience lighting and I basically did the show lighting."

Ungerleider didn't change many of his lighting cues for the shoot, but did have to make some adjustments for the cameras, "Well, you're shooting a DVD so a lot of things change, for instance the spots did not change color. The spots were in color correction at all times just to make sure that the camera could always see someone in the band. We were not blacking out between songs down there because the camera wanted to get as much as possible. They wanted to get the set changes. So I would black it out and then come right back in so the band were always lit up throughout the whole time period of their show. So as far as the intimacy of the show that you saw in North America it would be a lot different because when you're shooting video or film you need what's called 'key light.' And the key light cannot go away. That ensures that the camera is able to capture whatever they can. And there were a lot of cameras capturing footage."

Twenty-two cameras in total shot footage for the DVD which includes multi-angle options for "YYZ," "O Bateria," and "La Villa Strangiato." Banasiewicz notes, "cameras on cranes buzzed the audience as choppers filmed from overhead."

For fans of any band, a concert experience ranges from excitement to pure ecstasy. For fans in Brazil, a country witnessing it's first live Rush shows, it was definitely the latter. One might think that Marcelo Bahia may be more ecstatic than many fans, but for over ten-years he's waited only to finally see his favorite band. We join him again from the front row as he waits for the show to begin. The below excerpts from his powerful account captures the essence of the concert experience with senses alert and an intense emotional connection. But then again, isn't that what great music is supposed to evoke?

"The hours that I spent there before the concert, with the [barricade] in my hands, seemed endless. I kept looking at the stage for a long, long time, not believing I was actually so near it. It was also interesting because we had the opportunity to watch most of the stage being set, including Neil's whole drum kit. At 9:30pm, the time that the show was supposed to start, one of the producers came to the stage and announced that the new Rush DVD was going to be recorded in Rio."

"Our special treat, 'Closer to the Heart' had many people crying too, a lot of singing along and cigarette lighters everywhere. At moments like this, you could really *feel* there was something really special going on, a strong sensation coming from everyone in Maracanã. By looking at people's faces, I could once again realize that I was not the only one who had anxiously been waiting for this for years."

"No one could take their eyes off our Professor [a nickname for drummer Neil Peart] and the people who had never heard one of his solos before were simply astounded. I think that out of the 3 drum solos in Brazil this was the best one. When Neil finished, everyone in the seats and benches stood up and applauded, and the people on the field revered the Professor. One of the most touching moments of the concert."

"'The Spirit Of Radio' followed and one more time the whole stadium clapped along with song. It was kind of magical, simply beautiful! You had to see how happy Geddy was! Sometimes I think Rush did not know they had so many fans here in Brazil, I don't think they were expecting such an enthusiastic reception."

"That one was a magical night, and I think even the Gods of Rock'n'Roll knew it. Immediately after the concert, it started to rain very heavily in Rio. Even the rain waited for the end of the show!"

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