

# The Art of Evolution

## Two Decades Strong, Queensrÿche's Live Show Keeps Rockin'

By BRIAN J. HEATON

For more than 22 years, Queensrÿche has performed to live audiences around the globe. But after numerous world tours, keeping the show interesting and fresh remains a challenging goal for the band.



To meet that objective, Queensrÿche has incorporated cover songs into its set list in recent years, and has rearranged songs from its older albums, presenting acoustic renditions of classics such as "Silent Lucidity" and "Roads to Madness" – changes that have reinvigorated the band members and pleased long-time fans.

"[We're] always trying to do new things and have wanted to dip into song experimentation, and that time just seems right for us to do that now," explained Scott Rockenfield, founding member of Queensrÿche. "It keeps it fresh for us. We all go through the list of possible songs for every tour, [and] it really comes down to what we want to play as a band."

With recent performances centered on a full production of the band's critically acclaimed concept album, *Operation: Mindcrime*, and many of the quintet's greatest hits, some fans have been asking for a more diverse selection of songs - specifically, the obscure material from *The Warning* (1984) and *Rage for Order* (1986). Surprisingly, Queensrÿche's drummer revealed that such a request is a difficult one for the band to fulfill.

"I feel pretty good that we have been able to cover many of our songs over the years," Rockenfield said. "But we have found that some of the songs, either older or newer just do not translate well when played live in their original form. What we are trying to continuously do is work over those songs and see if we can come up with more flavorful ways to present them."



According to Rockenfield, the *Rage for Order* record is an arduous one to perform. Credited by many to be one of the defining albums that started the genre of progressive metal music, the songs require extensive preparation to play live, which causes the band to skip over many of that release's songs when developing a set list.

"*Rage for Order* has always been somewhat of a challenge," the drummer admitted. "We really wanted to expand our instrumentation with this record, and were able to go deep into textures and soundscapes, and in doing this, we found ourselves challenged when it came to present the material live, and had to work out different methods of pulling the songs off."

Building a reputation as one of the top live acts in rock music was no easy task, and the band continues to deliver skillful performances, regardless of the practical difficulties of performing some of the more-requested cuts from its back catalogue. On its last tour, Queensrÿche dusted off "The Whisper," a fan-favorite that had not been performed live for 15 years. Ultimately, with radio play back down to the levels before the band's commercial success in the early 1990s, Queensrÿche has come full-circle, touring extensively and providing fans with the same powerful two-hour performances that have awed audiences since the 1980s.

One of the primary reasons that reputation has withstood the test of time is Queensrÿche's commitment to an elaborate stage show – something that has set the band apart from its peers – with Rockenfield in the middle of it all, keeping time between various visual and auditory effects.

"All of our mixes are different," Rockenfield explained, referring to the inner ear monitors the band members wear to coordinate with one another on stage. "Mine consists of a nice blend of everything from all of the instruments, and also a good portion of our sound effects, which keeps me in time with the film that plays behind us on the screens."

With approximately 1000 shows behind them, the members of Queensrÿche undoubtedly have fond memories from more than 21 years of traveling the world. For Rockenfield, the major highlights were in London, England, and New York City, N.Y.

"I have so many good memories, but playing Royal Albert Hall in London was a cool experience," he recalled. "For Queensrÿche to be offered a chance to perform at that prestigious venue was an extreme honor."

"The most memorable shows we opened were the seven shows we did with Iron Maiden in early 1985 at Radio City Music Hall in New York," Rockenfield added. "It was a very exciting week of metal!"

As one would expect, touring the world on a semi-regular basis requires personal sacrifices, including family and privacy. While Queensrÿche has shown no signs of slowing down its relentless schedule, the drummer readily admitted that it's not always easy.

"Touring is something that you have to prepare for mentally," he explained. "It requires a certain headspace to leave your families and go out and expose yourself on a nightly basis. It's all about balance."

Thankfully, family is never too far away for the drummer. His older brother, Todd, serves as Scott's drum tech while on tour. "We have a very close relationship," the younger Rockenfield said. "I wouldn't change that for the world!"