

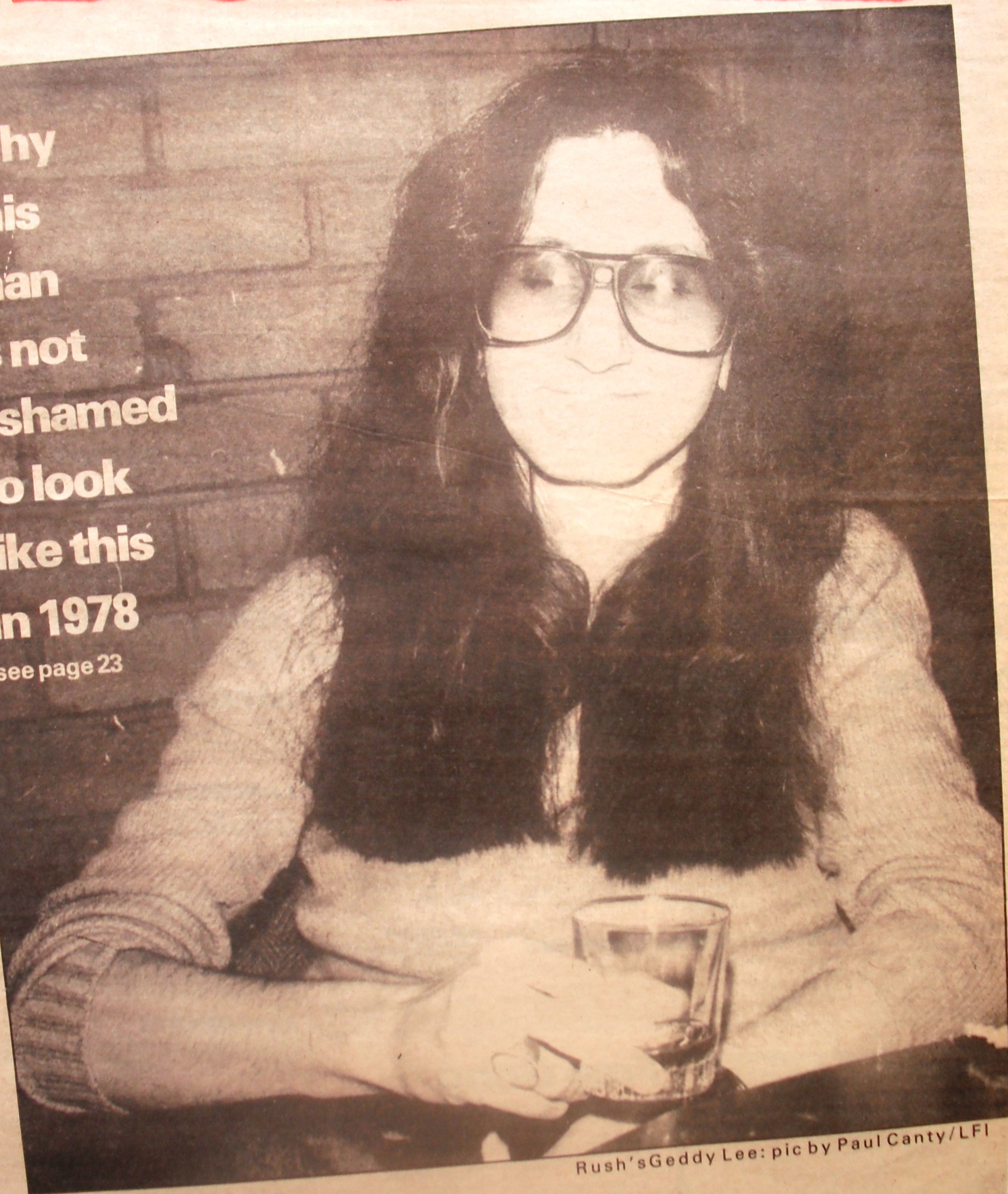
FEBRUARY 25 1978 18p

**BOWIE/PATTI SMITH dates**  
**GENESIS LP/TOM PETTY tour**

# Sounds

**Why  
this  
man  
is not  
ashamed  
to look  
like this  
in 1978**

see page 23



Rush's Geddy Lee: pic by Paul Canty/LFI

**RODS/RADIO STARS/IAN DURY/NICK LOWE**

# BLACK HOLES

**Close encounters with RUSH.**  
By Geoff Barton



**C**ONGRESS THEATRE, Washington DC. A scientific debate is in progress:

"... Of course, space travel is still in its infancy," crackles a voice over a barely adequate public address system, "but not, perhaps, for the reasons most commonly put forward and believed."

Professor Leon Reinhardt, a slight, stooped, eccentric looking man, adjusts the notes laid out on the table before him and prepares to go on. To most eyes in the audience he appears a rather absurd figure, standing up there on the rostrum: a harris tweed jacket, at least two sizes too big, draped over his body like a remnant from a carpet



warehouse, only serves to draw attention away from his ridiculous shock of hair. Carrot red and uncontrollable, it cascades over his forehead in an immense colourful wave that needs to be pushed out of the way of the eyes at least once a minute. His face, as if by some peculiar plan always bright and flushed, complements the tousled mane rather nicely.

Something of a misfit maybe, but no-one present tonight doubts Reinhardt's authority or knowledge of his chosen subject. "In the words of what I am most reliably informed is one of today's most popular television programmes," he continues, "we have the capability." (Laughter from the assembled scientists.) "That is to say, we could send a man to, for example, Alpha Centuri tomorrow if not for the problems we face as regards..." Reinhardt, a practised public speaker, pauses for effect. "... Fuel."

*SOMEWHERE IN the constellation of Cygnus. A spaceship is being torn apart:*

*The Rocinante is buckling under the strain — its thick, reinforced walls are crumpling like Bacofoil, pipes are bursting, instrument panels are exploding, fires are raging... worst of all, precious oxygen is seeping out from the numerous holes in the craft's fractured hull.*

*The pilot, still secure in his chair in the control cabin, watches with terror as the ship disintegrates before his eyes. His mind rages with memories, fears, concerns — but most of all, regrets. He'd done this thing, shot directly into the heart of an imploded star, for the sheer reckless adventure of it. He'd heard that you could traverse galaxies, break into new dimensions, travel to the far-flung future or back into the distant past... all this, maybe more, was supposed to be possible if you could manage to break through a black hole.*

*But 'manage' is the operative word. At the moment, the pilot is imperiled by fierce, unknown forces that are battering his craft and tearing it asunder, breaking it into little pieces. There seems no way out.*

*Abruptly, the ship's lighting system fails and all around is plunged into darkness. The noise of tremendous metallic crashings continues unabated, but the pilot notices that the Rocinante has ceased its headlong charge into infinity and now appears to be falling, spiralling, his safety harness straining as the craft turns around and around. Steadily, the speed increases — and as it does so, the seat suddenly disappears from beneath him, the ship from about him, and he is alone, tumbling through the blackness, the awful blackness...*

*Loss of consciousness comes as a blissful relief.*

**NEWCASTLE CITY Hall.** At an early stage in Rush's Tuesday night performance:

Geordies, going terminally crazy. OK, so we're late, but not that late... it's only the second number, 'Lakeside Park', after all — but already the venue is in a fairly raucous, riotous state.

Lots of long hair, lots of greatcoats (perhaps the New Wave's 'cleansing' influence hasn't been as far-reaching as some would have us believe?), lots of embroidered denim jackets, lots of peace sign salutes... irrefutable proof that heavy metal lives (not that it ever died, so it can't be 'this year's thing' because it's eternally popular, Goddammit!).

**Continues next page**

# RUSH

from page 23

Rush are new generation HM kings — with the absence of much quality homegrown product, just a single tour has established the Canadian trio as a top British tour attraction. It's not hard to see why, these boys being so far away from the 'traditional' three man redondo-rock outfit you'd scarcely believe it to be true. Sure, the roots are down there with the great guitar-bass-drums groups of years ago, but Rush have taken the original idea and stretched and expanded it, taken it to a logical (if distant) conclusion.

You get Alex Lifeson, Geddy Lee and Neil Peart filling the basic roles; you get swords and sorcery tales, sci-fi slants, synthesizers, acoustic guitars, chimes and percussive accessories as embellishments... the result is a three man band full of ambition, complexity, drive, enthusiasm and — maybe most important of all — a touch of grandeur.

THE DEBATE continues:

"I believe it's pointless for us to continue to stumble slowly through space at our present restrictive speed," Reinhardt asserts, with several heads in the audience nodding in appropriately grave scientific agreement. "Somehow we need to develop an alternative power source, something that will propel us at enormous speeds and will enable us to traverse great distances in a comparatively short space of time."

"What about Ion drive?" pipes a young voice, somewhere to Reinhardt's left in the auditorium.

"You've been reading too many science fiction stories, my boy," the professor cautions. "No, tonight we are going to talk about something rather more down-to-earth — but not in the strictest sense of the phrase of course, otherwise we might be in very great danger indeed."

Reinhardt reaches up to pull a cord which unravels a large display screen just behind him. Picking up a pointer, he indicates the largest of the several diagrams printed on the revealed chart.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he says, with a slight dramatic tinge to his voice, "the black hole of Cygnus X-1."

ELSEWHERE (OR elsewhere). A twist of fate rejoins the created with his creators:

So very cold. Chilled to the marrow. Soft substance beneath trembling hands. Darkness decorated with shards of silver. Wind whipping through the freezing air... air! Grateful deep breaths, filling the lungs with the life-giver, the soul-restorer, the senses-stimulator. Look up. Around. White gives way to stone, stone to wood, wood to metal (turn)... metal to warmth.

Peace of mind and sanctuary. Inside, it's brighter, artificial light emanating from apparatus on ceiling... also noiser. Much noisier.

RETURN TO the hall (if we're not already there):

'By-Tor And The Show Dog' is next — shorter, slightly modified, but nonetheless attacked with style and verve, Lee's guttural bass sounds battling it out with Lifeson's howling guitar, the latter as always winning the day ('Snow Dog is victorious, the land of the overworld is saved again') but not without a tooth, fang and claw scrap.

But now — make way for 'Xanadu', Rush's most triumphantly exacting song, here complete with bird tweeterings, synthesised punctuation, expressive doubleneck playing and atmospheric chiming. Lifeson, his blond hair a little longer than the last tour, his gold coat looking like an ornate drape jacket, plays expertly, as does Peart, a dervish on the drums. The kids put their hands into the air to accompany each sung syllable: 'Xan... a... duuuuu'. The number ends on military drumbeats and a gracious 'boom' — and it's as near perfection as we're going to get tonight.

From here on in, the sound sadly deteriorates and a troublesome echo unit punctuates several of Lifeson's more reflective solo spots with squealings and buzzings. In particular, the malfunctioning echo ruins my favourite part of '2112', 'Discovery', when the guitar is first found and to the sound of the words 'what can this strange device be?' (sung apparently off stage), Lifeson gently strums the instrument, becoming gradually more proficient as he goes. Instead, it's a case of BZZZZ! SQUARRRRK! BZZZZ! and a general dispelling of carefully conjured atmosphere.

The PA sound is well rough too, at least from where I'm



standing. Lacking in dynamics, it favours bass and drums, but most of all Lee's voice which, without the sound of instrumental thrashings around it, begins to sound a bit like a horse whinney on the higher notes...

So unfortunately, because of the equipment problems, not the greatest Rush gig I've seen — and certainly not a patch on last year's amazing Hammersmith Odeon London debut. But the band try hard, managing to build up the set again whenever a particularly offensive SQUEEEET! knocks it down and the crowd, recognising the band's problems, do their best to help them along.

Of the numbers off 'A Farewell To Kings' (which I did in fact put on my 'Best Of '77' listing, readers — it just didn't turn out in the paper that way) 'Closer To The Heart' succeeds best with the title track running a close second: on each, Lifeson's acoustic passages are deftly executed, leaving you anxious for perhaps more insertions of a similar sort in the future. 'Cygnus X-1', however, comes across a trifle fragmented after the compulsive bass-dominated introduction — maybe more time is needed for the song to gain full maturity in the context of Rush's set.

Other tunes included '2112' (of course), 'Something For Nothing' (with the lyrics 'what you own is

your own kingdom' sounding as great as ever), 'Anthem' (which, following directly after the complexity of 'Cygnus X-1', comes as a welcome return to straight forward rock 'n' roll normality) and a revised triple encore of 'Working Man/Fly By Night/In The Mood'. For the finale, there's bright fright as the banks of mole lights are turned on to full intensity and 'Cinderella Man' closes the show.

THE CHART explained:

"You all know something about the phenomena of black holes, do you not?" asks Reinhardt. A murmur of assent from the audience. "Good. Then you may also know that some, shall I say, strange possibilities have been suggested for these imploded stars. Since there is, ostensibly, no way to get out of a black hole once inside, it is in a certain sense a separate universe.

"Which brings me to my point about space travel. It has been conjectured — and I for one am currently involved in further research into this — that black holes are doors in the universe, gateways to infinity if you like. It is within the realms of possibility that, if a spacecraft entered a black hole, it would emerge out the other side in a different section of the universe, in a galaxy perhaps millions of light years

on the floor and . . . still haven't seen me.

Can't see me.

**HOLIDAY INN, Newcastle.** An interview with Geddy Lee:

Like each member of Rush, Lee is quiet, unassuming and studious. His speaking voice is totally unlike his high pitched stage scream: evenly modulated, soft and precise, it couldn't really be more of an opposite. Slight of build, easy going in manner, he wears large dark-rimmed spectacles for longsightedness when not performing — which, along with his thick, abundant head of hair (he couldn't have written 'I Think I'm Going Bald') hides much of his angular face.

*Do you have any new songs written for the next album?*

"We have a problem on this occasion with our timing — our touring schedule has escalated, we've been gigging like maniacs day in and day out . . . so no, we haven't had that much time to write anything new. I don't think we've been really ready to yet anyway, 'Kings' took such a drain on our brains.

"However, in the last month things have started to dribble out. Neil's got a couple of ideas stirring for lyrics, so do I . . . just little snatches, you know. Also, we've been coming in earlier for our soundchecks and jamming for about an hour — some interesting things are starting to happen there, as well.

"We've set aside some time for writing actually, because we know it we don't block out a couple of weeks or so we'll never get things done. We're due to record the next album in June, at Rockfield once again. We'll be coming over two weeks early to stay at the old millhouse just down the road from the studios and we plan to

do some writing there, so we should be alright."

*Why are you returning to Rockfield?*

"We were very happy with the sound we got there for 'Kings', also it's got so much to offer. There're open spaces, there's lots of air, lots of room to move around and get — uh — inspired. Also, Rockfield is so good if you want to experiment — you know, you can go outside to record, use their weird echo room . . . that's the kind of environment we like because a lot of our most creative time is in the studios and when you have all the facilities at your fingertips, it's perfect."

*So you feel 'A Farewell To Kings' benefitted from the change in studios?*

"Yes, definitely. We're very pleased with that album. In retrospect it's the only one of our albums apart from '2112' that I can really live with. I've yet to look at it and start finding fault with it, pick it apart, you know. . . it still sounds so positive."

*There's a surprising amount of acoustic guitar playing on 'Kings'. Is this an aspect of your music you'd like to develop still further?*

"I don't know, it all depends on the next album and how it works out. I like the way we use acoustic passages kind of juxtaposed against heavier material, but I can't see us getting into a really long piece. Synthesizers are going to play a bigger part on the next album though, that's something I've been working on. I've just acquired an Oberheim Polyphonic and I've been trying to figure out how to play it . . . I think I've got the hang of it now. It can make endless sounds and I'd like to

incorporate it into the album . . . but then again that's restrictive because I also have a bass to play. We have to keep all the different textures under strict control, otherwise things will get out of hand and we'll never be able to reproduce our music onstage.

"The mainstream of our music will always be guitar, bass and drums and all the other enhancements must slot in the flow of things, so we can play everything onstage and it all comes naturally. We're doing it now of course — it's just a matter of seeing how far we can take it."

*On the inner sleeve to 'Kings', beneath the lyrics to 'Cygnus X-1', it says 'to be continued'. Will this be on the next album?*

"Hmm . . . it's still in the works. It's a really big subject, it's going to be an immense thing. At first, we were very slow about it, we made sure even before we wrote anything that we all agreed what the concept should be — it's important that it's well thought out. At the moment we're doing other things, getting back into the rhythm of writing, meanwhile keeping 'Cygnus X-1' in the backs of our minds.

"It's intriguing, because now that we've said 'to be continued', it's almost implying that it's going to be continued immediately . . . and we thought for a while of holding back and maybe doing other things first. Now, however, we're back into doing it on the next album. I think we have to."

*Do you envisage it being a kind of son of '2112'? After all, you can't*

*go on playing that number forever.*

"That's true, we're going to have to come to terms with that for our next tour. Every time we put a new album out, it's harder to choose the songs to lose. At the moment, we're at the point where we really enjoy all the songs we play — next time it's really going to be a big decision, judging where to cut down."

*You're pleased with the way this tour has gone so far?*

"Oh yes, no doubt about it. It's funny — I've done a few interviews since I've been over here and people have been asking me why we're suddenly breaking so big in Britain. I have to say I don't know, that I'm as surprised as they are . . . but it's a pleasant surprise, all the same. Something that I've noticed, something that's significantly different from the US and Canada, is the amount of involvement the audience has with our music over here.

"We're so used to playing in the mid-west, where everyone just wants to have a party, get down, kick ass or whatever that it's great to have your subtleties, the statements that you try to put the songs, the various things you spend time on appreciated. It's very gratifying indeed."

**REINHARDT AND the startling theory:**

"What is even more fantastical, ladies and gentlemen, is that black holes could be more than passages through space, they could be apertures through time. In one speculative view, an object that plunges down a rotating black hole may emerge at another place and another time . . .

"Who is to say how reliable — if at all — this manner of time transportation would be, however? Would an object or person arrive intact? Or would the molecular structure be so disarranged as to cause some sort of 'blinking out', so that the traveller in question could only remain in one place for a short length of time?"

**HEADLONG INTO mystery (once again):**

"They're going and I'm drifting — they can't see, hear or feel me; I can't contact them. Must follow up the stairs, through the doors and — more people, smaller, brandishing sharp implements, waving some kind of parchment. And the others . . . they tarry for a while and then leap into the black container to speed away. They've gone. But these others, perhaps they can help me. If they're friendly, if they don't attack, if they —

(At this point the pilot 'blinked out'.)



away from its starting point.

"Interesting, is it not? Interesting . . . but perhaps not as startling as another black hole theory I have come across and which I shall explain to you now."

**SOMEWHERE (OR somehow):**

The noise has ebbed, flowed and finally abated. The light still glares, but the cold is returning. Ear to the ground and . . . sounds from below, talking. An unfamiliar dialect, can only understand certain words. But help, perhaps? Stiffly rise to the feet, sway a little, lean against wall for support. Now, down the stairs, along the ancient carpeted corridor. Push open the door and — yes! — people in old-fashioned costume, huddled around a fire. An electric fire — how odd. Haven't seen me. Wave my arms, shout at top of my voice, stamp

