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
Close encounters with RUSH.
By Geoff Barton

C O N G R E S S T H E A T R E , 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. Too many eyes in the audience he appears a rather
abused figure, standing up there on the rostrum: a barbie twind
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..."

(Extracted from an assemble scientist.)

"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 practiced public
speaker, pauses for effect.

"...Fuel."

S O M E W H E R E I N the
constellation of Cygnus. A
spaceship is being torn apart:
The Rocinante is buckling
under the strain -- its thick,
reinforced walls are crumpling
like Barco foil, 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,
watched with horror as the ship
disintegrated 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
imprisoned 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 fighting
system fails and all around
plunges into darkness. The noise
of tremendous metallic crashing
continues unabated, but the pilot
notices that the Rocinante has
canceled its heading charge into
infinity and now appears to be
falling, spiraling, his safety
harness straining as the craft turns
around and around. Steadily, the
g 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.

N E W C A S T L E C I T Y H A L L. At an
early stage in Rush's Tuesday
night performance:

Costumes, 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 in a
fairly raucous, riotous state.

Lots of long hair, lots
of greatcoats (perhaps the New
Wave's 'cleaning influence
haven'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 the 'this year's thing' because
it's eternally popular.

Costumes.

Continues next page
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 redundant 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, 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 dants, 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 unleashes a large display screen just behind him. Picking up a pointer, he indicates the largest of the several diagrams printed on the reverse chart.

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

ELSEWHERE (OR ELSEWHEN), A twist of fate rejoints the created with his creators: So very cold. Chilled to the marrow. Such substance beneath trembling hands. Darkness decorated with shards of silver. Wind whispering through the freezing air... with grateful deep breaths, filing the songs with the life-giver, the soul-restorer, the sex-stimulator. Look up. Around. White gives way to stone, stone to wood, wood to metal (turn)... metal to warmth.

Peace of mind and sanctity. Inside, it’s brighter, artificial light emanating from purpule 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 battering it out with Lifeson’s bowing guitar, the latter as always winning the day (‘Snow Dog is victorious, the hand 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 twittersings, 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 dresser on the drums. The kids put their hands into the air to accompany each sung syllable: ‘Xan... u... dunnun’. 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 slowly deteriorates and a troublesome echo unit punctuates several of Lifeson’s more reflective solo spots with squealings and buzzings. In particular, a 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 do’ (and apparently off stage), Lifeson gently stream the instrument, becoming gradually more proficient as he goes. Instead, it’s a case of BZZZ! SQUAWK! BZZZZ! and a general dispelling of carefully cultured 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 whinnying 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 Odden London debut. But the band try hard, managing to build up the set again whenever a particularly offensive SQUEEF! 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’d 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’ 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 items 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’, comes as a welcome return to straight forward rock ‘n roll normality) and a revised triple encore of ‘Working Man’, ‘By Night/In The Mood’. For the finale, there’s bright fright as the banks of moie lights are turned on to ‘I’s intensity and ‘Cinderella Man’ closes the show.

THE CHART explained: “You all know something about the phenomenon of black holes, do you not?” asks Reinhardt: A murmurer of assent from the audience. “Good. Then you may also know that some, shall I say, strange possibilities have been suggested for these impeciled 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 for one am I 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 long sightedness 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 tour 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 really been ready to try anything. '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 starting for me to go on I ... just little snatches, you know. Also, we've been coming in together for our soundcheck 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 if 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 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 in 'Cygnus X-I', 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 into the rhythm of writing, meanwhile keeping 'Cygnus X-I' in the back 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've used to playing in the mid-west, where everyone just wants to have a party, get down, kick ass or whatever it is that'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 standart theory:

"It's 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 excursion 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 stair, through the doors and — more people, smaller, brandishing sharp implements, waving some kind of parchment. And the others ... they tarry for a while and open up the black paper container to speed away. They've gone. But those others, perhaps they can help me. If they're friendly, if they don't attack, if they —

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