

UFO SIGHTING GAVE RIKKI IDEA FOR SONG FOR EUROPE

WHEN Rikki Peebles steps out in Brussels this Saturday, May 9, to sing Britain's entry in the Eurovision Song Contest, the audience will be somewhat larger than that which was present the first time the song got a try-out.

Tens of millions of TV viewers throughout Europe will settle down to give their personal verdict on Rikki's "Only The Light"—but like his other numbers it got its first airing in a Glasgow taxi!

Rikki used to be a cabbie and sang snatches of his latest ditty to his fares to get their opinion.

"They were always really honest," Rikki told *The Weekly News*. "If they didn't like it they soon let me know!"

Overnight success

The notion of a singing cabbie just waiting for his big break sounds like it could have come straight from a Hollywood musical. In Rikki's case it's a dream come true.

Rikki, from Tollcross in Glasgow, spent 12 long years waiting for the overnight success which has now come his way.

"I've been around on the scene for a long time and really wanting to hang on, I had to make ends meet," explained Rikki, who's 31.

Taxi driver Rikki was out late one night when he saw "amazing light in the sky"

"Driving a taxi was ideal as it let me be my own boss so I could be free when I needed to be for recordings and the like.

"It was also great for meeting people and getting inspiration. Frequently I'd be driving along or waiting for a fare when an idea for a song would come to me.

"If I didn't do something about it there and then I knew I'd forget so I'd hum it to myself and scribble it down so I could get it on tape when I got home. That's how I'd end up trying little bits of my songs out on people."

Giant beam

It was an experience while driving the taxi in and around Glasgow which gave Rikki the idea for "Only The Light"—an experience which shook him to the core—a UFO sighting.

"I was stopped at a set of traffic lights one snowy winter's night when I looked up and saw this amazing

light in the sky," continued Rikki.

"It was very late and there was about five inches of snow on the ground so it was quiet and at first I thought my eyes were playing tricks.

"But it was as clear as can be. It was massive and as the sky was clear I watched it move right across until it disappeared over the horizon.

"The best way I can describe it is like a giant torch beam. It was the weirdest thing I have ever seen in my life and it naturally gave me quite a shock.

"It stuck in my mind and

that's where the title for the song came from."

Some 2000 entries flooded in for this year's Song for Europe, for the first time many coming from record companies rather than from songwriters who'd pen a song then get together an act just for Eurovision.

Drained

Finally these were whittled down to just 10 who battled it out "live" on a "Wogan" show.

"That was really nerve-racking," admitted Rikki. "Not so much performing the number, but the voting.

"When I was announced as the winner I was so drained from the tension I could barely take it in.

"But delighted as I was, the biggest joy was in winning for my wife Agnes and my family back home in Glasgow. They were the ones who'd supported me all the way and they were the ones who really deserved it."



Rikki Peebles.

SINGING CABBIE TESTED OUT SONGS ON HIS PASSENGERS