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ALL THINGS MUSIC

LIVE
MUSIC FOR
THE WEEK
p.23

Stellar songs to soundtrack a trip to **OUTER SPACE**

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY • The Bulletin

Humanity’s fascination with the cosmos shows up in our art time and time again, and music is no exception. Examples abound: John Lennon singing “Across the Universe,” Pink Floyd’s “Dark Side of the Moon” album, the Afrofuturism and deep mythology of Parliament-Funkadelic, the Fender Stratocaster guitar (a derivative of “stratosphere” and so named to capitalize on the space race in the 1950s). Oh, and Hawkwind, which turned an obsession with the universe into a genre (space rock). GO! Magazine is celebrating all things space this week, in honor of NASA landing the Perseverance Rover on Mars recently. This playlist of 13 space-themed songs (last year marked the 50th anniversary of Apollo 13’s safe return to Earth) will hopefully get you into a galactic mood.

“LIFE ON MARS,” DAVID BOWIE

Perhaps the strangest thing about this entry is that it’s not “Space Oddity,” which is arguably Bowie’s most “space rock” song. But “Life on Mars,” with its surrealistic lyrics about cavemen and police officers “beating on the wrong guy,” evokes stronger emotions (at least in this writer) while being less on-the-nose.

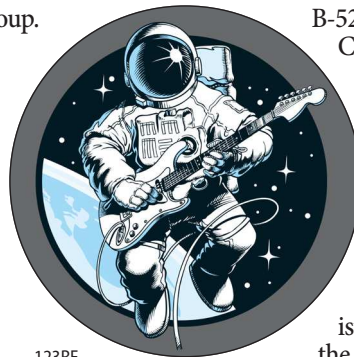
“MOTHERSHIP CONNECTION (STAR CHILD),” PARLIAMENT

George Clinton not only pioneered funk music with his Parliament-Funkadelic musical collective, he also helped bring Afrofuturism to the fore, especially with the more

pop-oriented Parliament group. The 1975 album “Mother-ship Connection” is one of the best examples of the group’s sci-fi leanings, and this track in particular introduces Clinton’s alien alter-ego, Star Child.

“SLIME CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE,” “WEIRD AL” YANKOVIC

Of course the king of weird has to appear on a space rock playlist. (This reporter will not rest until Weird Al is on every playlist, ever.) A style parody of The



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B-52s and Thomas Dolby, “Slime Creatures from Outer Space” relays the story of the titular aliens’ Earth invasion, as only Yankovic can.

“COMET, COME TO ME,” MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO

A late-career entry from a respected, formative artist, “Comet, Come to Me” is the title track on Meshell Ndegeocello’s 11th studio album, released in 2014. The music rides

a pseudo-reggae groove with elements of soul, funk and rock — a fine compendium

of Ndegeocello’s massive influence — while the lyrics grapple with mortality.

“ASTRONOMY,” BLUE OYSTER CULT

Though not necessarily thought of as space rock, Blue Oyster Cult always struck me as the perfect soundtrack to a flying saucer ride. “Astronomy,” originally released on 1974’s “Secret Treaties,” definitely fits the bill, with sci-fi-themed lyrics (by producer Sandy Pearlman) that reference constellations and other celestial objects (“the light that never warms” = the Moon, for an example).

“SPACE JUNK,” DEVO

This formative track from Devo’s 1978

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