



The Malcolm Garrett Collection Playlist #7

Beyond the Infinite

Compiled in 2019

Pop has had a fascination with other worlds and what lies beyond the stars ever since the beginning of man's exploration of space. Although there were no doubt many precedents, musicians began to respond in earnest after a futuristic recording by The Tornados, celebrating the 1962 launch of *Telstar*, the world's first operational communications satellite, rocketted to the top of the charts. In a weird twist of logic though this is my final track.

Despite it being an obvious milestone, and chronologically asks to be the opener, *Telstar* somehow felt out of place at the start of this sequence of tracks, which are mainly from the second half of the '60s when the *Space Race* was at its peak. For a combination of pop sensibility and clear reference to outer space, enhanced by a knowing lyric that is dripping with psychedelic awareness, I initially considered bestowing the honour of opening this set to The Rolling Stones, with their 1967 hit *2000 Light Years From Home* – a bit of a one-off journey that I don't recall them ever making again – but instead I've chosen a rather obscure single, *Lady Green Grass* by a German band The Ones, who were fronted by a pre-Tangerine Dream Edgar Froese. It also drips with psychedelic awareness but it keeps its feet on the ground, as seemed appropriate at the start of a celestial/cerebral journey.

The recordings don't have particular individual meanings, attachments or reference points for me, although one or two undoubtedly made a deep impression on my teenage self. Taken together they are, however, a reminder that space, both inner and outer, were themes that bands were navigating as they explored their own minds with psychedelic drugs, and kosmonauts, astronauts and scientists provided real-world inspiration venturing into the cosmos above our heads. Both were expanding horizons and journeying into unknown territory: as above, so below.

Most tracks I've selected for inclusion were released between 1967 and 1970. By the end of '60s, the fascination for science fiction and science-based themes, had embedded itself in contemporary music. It fully embraced the electronic sounds that had been pioneered initially using custom-built equipment. The entirely electronic soundtrack for the film *Forbidden Planet* (1956) audibly suggested that to be truly futuristic then the audio accompaniment should be composed electronically. The revolutionary producer of *Telstar*, Joe Meek (1962), the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's incidental music for TV programmes, most notably the *Dr Who* theme tune (1965); and the classical-trained musician Walter (Wendy) Carlos, with his (her) *Switched on Bach* LP (1968) created entirely with a Moog synthesiser, all entered the mainstream before the '60s were over.

It was the ever-prescient pop starman David Bowie penned his first hit *Space Oddity* (1969) using the novelty electronic 'toy'

Stylophone, and neatly straddled the release of Stanley Kubrick's epic film *2001 – A Space Odyssey* (1968) and the moment Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the moon for the first time, for all mankind (July 1969). It wasn't long before access to off-the-shelf synthesisers became readily available. As the '70s dawned, and adventurous rock bands looked to expand their sonic horizons, manufacturers such as Moog, ARP and EMS (with its ever-popular VCS3), all released affordable and portable electronic synthesisers, thus liberating electronics from the experimental, laboratory environment, and introduced previously unheard sounds into the hands of rock musicians and the ears of their audiences.

With notable exceptions, such as Brian Eno of course, it seemed to me that it was primarily musicians in Berlin, Cologne and Düsseldorf* who pushed the boundaries. They had systematically set off in search of a new sound for a contemporary Germany – one that wasn't rooted in American Blues or Jazz precedents, nor beholden to Classical European origins – and continued the journey into space, subjectively and conceptually, voyaging into the next decade, and ultimately shaped the electronic, sonic landscape we enjoy today.

Some of the artists in this selection you'll know, some you won't, and some may surprise you with their occasional and quite brief forays into outer space. They include...

Tangerine Dream
Pink Floyd
Hawkwind
Van der Graaf Generator
The Ones
Tonto's Expanding Headband
Black Sabbath
The Who
The Rolling Stones
Jimi Hendrix

'Take your protein pills, and put your helmet on'.
Then take a listen...

* Musicians such as Cluster, Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, Conrad Schnitzler, Kraftwerk, Popol Vuh, Ash Ra Tempel, Neu! and The Cosmic Jokers, many of whom can be heard on the [Von Himmel Hoch > From Krautrock to Kosmische Musik](#) playlist, all contributed to the reshaping of contemporary popular music through their experiments with new sounds and new music formats.