

Jazz for Humans in Space: Let's Trek to Mars Focusing on the Journey and Then the Destination.

By Marshall Hawkins

Louis Armstrong: trumpeter, singer, composer, and occasional actor was instrumental in nicknaming the jazz musicians, "the Cats." He was one of the most influential musicians in terms of creating the new sound known as improvisation. He and his mentor Joe "King" Oliver were jazzmen who paved the way for so many that followed. Louis Armstrong's gift enabled him to rise above the conditions of the time that excluded African Americans from the upper echelons of American society. Jazz was relatively new, and many people had no idea how to internalize this new and innovative sound. Louis Armstrong's legacy enabled him to rise and visit the ionosphere. In his footsteps were musicians such as Thelonious Sphere Monk, John Coltrane, and Sun Ra, who were often considered to be space cadets.

Lift off: the journey has begun.

Looking back on this beautiful blue planet reminds me of Thelonious "Sphere" Monk and his amazing work and the numerous compositions that are second only to the published works of Duke Ellington. The blues is considered to be the platform for jazz in terms of recording the history of the time via improvisation. The simplicity of the blues is a challenge for the musicians to tell a story for the enlightenment of humans. I feel that Thelonious Sphere Monk's "Blue Monk" exemplifies the blue planet Earth, and it is the blues most selected by jazz musicians during jam sessions and concerts. Humans would be the beneficiaries of emotional stability if they could listen to the blues as they trek to parts unknown in the universe. There is a chance to be in contact with Sun Ra, who claimed residence on Saturn and came to earth preaching peace. Ra is the ancient Egyptian God of the Sun. This freestyle approach to jazz by Sun Ra had no time or key signatures, and when listening to or playing this music, it left you orbiting Saturn. When Louis Armstrong played during his time, some people thought his approach to the new sound was "out there" or "far out" like space.

How can humans better coexist with technology, and what role might jazz play in this process?

Because of technology, jazz is more accessible than ever, and the young generation of the world will be instrumental in making sure jazz is not trapped by inertia. In its first session, the 92nd Congress passed a Joint Resolution of the US Senate and the House of Representatives on March 16, 1971 that declared that jazz was the national music of the United States. This declaration has given impetus and catapulted jazz to a state of momentum.

We are 100 days into the journey, and our thoughts are on the idea of a new colony on Mars. Technology has advanced exponentially, and it is responsible for this journey as

we speak. Jazz and space travel have a lot in common, because it takes an enormous amount of concentration to get from point A to point B. You must love music in its authenticity, even if it is not the music of your heritage. Jazz has evolved exponentially, because it has woven music from many cultures of the world, and it has acquired ubiquitous status. The cultural and spiritual journey of this music in many ways is a repository of information about our ancestry and the evolution of this planet, expressed through an expressive and significant art form.

Jazz is the first music that different cultures have embraced and contributed to significantly. Just think, the ocean and space and are similar because there is a preoccupation with survival, which creates a bonding for a prompt return. The bonding when listen to or playing jazz is different, because the journey you take with jazz brings a bonding that lasts for a while and, in some cases, forever. Humans will need to bond to take the journey to Mars. Listening to the music of Sun Ra while on this trek will reflect the universal surroundings, such as the stars and planets.

The idea of a colony on Mars may or may not fit with the past norms of earth's society. On Mars there are no cities, states, countries, or continents, which in itself deters conquest.

Because of jazz, the new colony and the humans who live there will be very close to a pure democracy, which is one of the outstanding properties of jazz. The citizens of the new world will become a repository of human traditions and cultural wealth; these are elements technology lacks. We may not be conscious of how technology has taken the place of our memory. Jazz is memory-based, and it gives humans an opportunity to pursue a healthier memory. Live performances are the perfect events to serve the human memory. The flashbacks that occur long after the music has been heard can serve as an important part of the human repository. Space has its memory bank, because the music that has been played for centuries will be heard on the trek to Mars and other places in the universe. Louis Armstrong and Joe "King" Oliver will be marching in the saints, Thelonious Sphere Monk and Miles Davis will remind us to keep the earth in view by remembering "Blue Monk" and Kind of Blue. Sun Ra's music will encourage us to seek the source. Jazz exemplifies the human characteristics of spontaneity and communication that technology can never replace. It represents the ability to keep information within ourselves and not just on computers. It is also important in maintaining our human identity as technology advances exponentially. Slam Stewart, a renowned bassist, played with many giants from Coleman Hawkins to Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. His final recording was entitled, "The Cats Are Swingin'." If you think for one moment that the great giants of music no longer exist, then it is time for you to consider taking this amazing journey to Mars and to experience John Coltrane saying ... WELCOME.

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About the Author: In his early years, legendary jazz bassist Marshall Raymond Hawkins lived on Eaton and Howard Roads. His exposure to music began with Birney Elementary School and Douglass Junior High School glee clubs. He learned to play drums and piano, and by age 16, he was the organist for church services throughout the Washington Metropolitan area. He asserts that Frank Maxwell, Superintendent of Music in the DC Public Schools, influenced his ultimate choice of instrument, the upright bass.

Marshall played with Shirley Horn for four years in DC, joined the Miles Davis Quintet, played with Eddie Jefferson, toured with Richie Cole in Europe and Japan, performed with Roberta Flack at DC's Mr. Henry's, and eventually formed his own Marshall Hawkins Quintet. His classical credits include performances with the National Symphony as guest soloist for a composition written for jazz bass and woodwind quintet; the San Jacinto Community College Orchestra, and the Idyllwild Arts Chamber and Festival Orchestras.

Marshall now lives in Idyllwild, California where he has established a Jazz Studies program at Idyllwild Arts Academy. Here he teaches Lifestyles of Jazz and brings other art forms to the next generation of aspiring artists. He is Co-Founder and Music Director of Jazz in the Pines Music Festival, which raises scholarship money for students attending the Idyllwild Arts Academy.

The Marshall Hawkins Jazz Building was so named to honor Marshall's more than two decades of service to Idyllwild Arts Academy. He also was the first recipient of the Idyllwild Arts Foundation "Lifetime in Arts Achievement Award." In 2008, he was selected by the Goethe Institute to serve as ambassador to the International Jazzahead Conference in Bremen, Germany, representing the United States, Idyllwild Arts Foundation, and Jazz in the Pines.

Seahawk Modern Jazz Orchestra (MOJO) is his latest venture. MOJO performs throughout Southern California raising money to promote jazz music and educational programs at elementary and secondary schools. "The world would 'b-flat' without music," Marshall quips. Hawk is an avid tennis player and has received several awards for his competitive play. He says one thing is sure, "I'm still East Coast, DC, and an Anacostia homeboy."



Editors' Notes: Marshall Hawkins is a Jazz Teacher and Performer hero. He is loved by his students who now circle the world, by his friends, and for the last 25 years by the leadership, administration, teachers and staff at Idyllwild Arts, one of the world's leading music and arts schools. Marshall is more than a jazz legacy. He gives of himself to those in need. We are proud to publish his elegant thoughts about how jazz will also meet the needs of humans in Space. **Bob Krone and Gordon Arthur.**