

Messages from the Cosmos

AUSTIN MATHEWS heads for deep space as he chats with heavy psychedelic guitar progenitor TERRY BROOKS about his life, music and NASA.



I yield to no man in my admiration of the music of Terry Brooks. Probably best known for his first two albums, *Translucent World* from 1973 and *Raw Power* from '76, Brooks' style is a maddeningly manic brand of space-psych adorned with some of the fastest, most thrilling solos in rock history. His unique career has taken in rock stardom, The Vietnam War, teaching, treasure hunting, painting and writing.

After a difficult upbringing, Terry got his start on the blues circuit. "I started out playing blues on the black circuit all over the US – the chitlin' circuit as it was known. I played all over the US with a black band, travelling around with 18 people on a bus – at that time there were no white people in these clubs. I was the only white guy there. This gig started in '61. It was a rough time because of the racial tensions. I'd seen a lot of abuse of the band members that were with me, and many bad situations, but playing and travelling around Texas, Mexico, Ohio, Mississippi, Louisiana – man you are talking about having a ball. That was the least money I ever made in music and the most fun I ever had! All we lived for was the note, the sound – and man we could really kick."

In the late '60s Terry had to take a serious detour away from music. "I ended up in the army in 'nam which we won't go into. This was the mid-60s and I got drafted. When I came back I had a pretty tough time for a long while after that with depression and everything and I started playing blues again. It started with the album *Translucent World* when I was still in a

kind of daze. I was just kind of a lost person with all that stuff that had happened to me. All I had was my music and the feeling in my music and I wrote about what I felt."

Translucent World is credited to "Strange" (later releases were credited to Terry Brooks & Strange, and then just to Terry Brooks) and was released on Terry's own label in '73. Fans of heavy-psych guitar should need no introduction to this masterwork that takes the ghost of Hendrix and blasts it into the outer solar system. "*Translucent World* – you could tell where I was when you listen to it – I was way out there. There was a PO Box that was open for *Translucent World* that I never checked. When I finally did, there were hundreds of letters from record companies trying to get a hold of me from all over Europe, all the record companies. I missed a shot there." At this time Terry also rejected an offer from RCA. "They wanted to change my band and for certain people to go, so I turned them down."

A three-year gap followed before Terry cut *Raw Power* in '76. The album builds on the sound of the first, adding even more brain-damaging solos, in particular on the blistering side-long 'Life Jam.' These first two albums were put out on Terry's own imprint, Outer Galaxie Records, in pressings of 5000 and 1000 respectively. Unfortunately the late '70s saw a break from recording: "Vietnam became a dominant part of my mind," Terry explains. "I began teaching at a music school. I was teaching them guitar and guitar method, teaching them to write songs. I did that for two or three years."

When Terry got back in the studio in the '80s, his sound had matured somewhat into high energy hard-rock, replacing some of the cosmic jamming with a crisp punchy sound that also coincided with a period of commercial success. His third album, *To Earth With Love*, was released in '80. "That was cut in Miami in Criteria Studios. They called me The Cosmic Soldier down there. That album made the *Billboard* chart – it did well and had a lot of airplay. A German company, Polygram, wanted to buy and distribute the record but I'd already signed the rights for Italy (GGD) and in England (Psycho). That was a shame because they would have really pushed the album in Europe.

"The next album was *High Flyer* – cut in one day. I went into the mastering room, took the masters to the factory myself, had them put it on the press, stood there and mixed the wax. They said it was the fastest record ever made. All the elements were done in one day."

Aside from a couple of compilations of rarities and unreleased material (*No Exit* and *Blastin' Thru*), there followed a long-term hiatus from music. "In the time off I had a

company that searched for treasure. I had an archaeologist in my company and we went around and did the exploration of the ocean."

During the same time frame, Terry continued to explore the psychic unknown. "I did research into Indian tribes. I wrote a math language that my friend, Dr Chisholm, studied. He saw the symbols I had drawn on *To Earth With Love* and said, "Oh man, these are quantum math – really advanced figures of quantum." I had several books that I had written through automatic writing. Then I got into the psychic area and the cosmos and other people started getting involved. I met people from NASA and the scientific side of things took me away from music.

"What it is, I had a vision of things in space that had not been discovered yet – things that then were discovered four or five years later. Dr Chisholm would make a note of this. I was always bringing up these new things that were happening. That's where the cosmic connections in my music come from – my vision of mind that was in space. When I play guitar – after the first note – I don't remember a thing, I can feel the energy coming in. All the symbols are in the book (*Father Rock*). People think this is just a story but it has some of the actual mathematical formulations of some of the things I've seen. The book tells the truth. I took it off into a mystical realm."

Since then Terry has focused on his book, *Father Rock*. His first novel is a terrific sci-fi romp with more truth than the casual reader may realise. "It took me nine years to write *Father Rock*. It's 75% what happened in my life." Terry is currently looking for a director to film the book for which he will record the soundtrack. "The film will release a positive energy force field when it comes out," he elucidates. "It will explain positive forces and negative forces that have to be overcome. The music will be recorded during the film's recording. The mathematical values of the notes within the structure of the songs will have a vibrational frequency that will affect different areas in different ways than normal. There are many frequencies and sub-sonics I would like to use but can't as we're limited on this planet. The whole universe is one tone, one frequency."

Any fan of heavy psychedelic guitar has not got a complete record collection until they've checked out Terry's music, which they can do at his new website TerryBrooksandStrange.com. Asked to describe his guitar playing he replies, "It's a cosmically energised style. I was very careful not to play other people's music. I was also careful not to look at any other mathematical extrapolations. I didn't want to be influenced by anything else." 