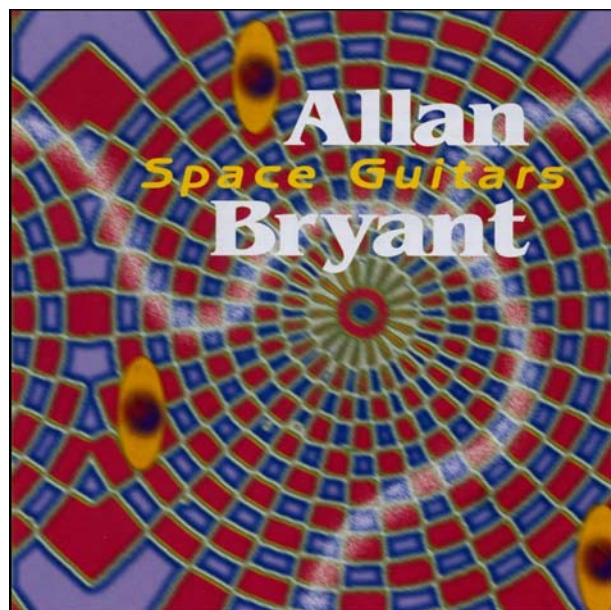


# Allan Bryant—Space Guitars

## *Space Physics and Science Fiction in Sound*



1. *Whirling Take-Off* ..... (6:30)
2. *A Bouncing People Planet* ..... (6:40)
3. *Space Guitars* ..... (13:49)
4. *A Rocket Is a Drum* ..... (6:45)
5. *Space Train* ..... (12:00)
6. *Insect Takeover* ..... (14:36)
7. *Space Storm* ..... (10:26)

*All works performed by the composer*

*Revised and expanded from the classic CRI LP (5D 366)*

Total playing time: 71:16

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## Notes

I was born in Detroit (1931), studied chemistry and music at Princeton (1949–53), and after the army, pro-baseball, and working as a chemist at Cape Canaveral, I went to “Köln State” (Music School) in Germany on the GI Bill, (1959–63) and spent a lot of time watching Karlheinz Stockhausen work. I then “visited” Rome (1964–87) where Frederic Rzewski, Alvin Curran, Jon Phetteplace and I put together a group, “Musica Elettronica Viva” (MEV), to create electronic-sounding music in concert. Stockhausen came to a concert of ours in Dusseldorf in 1968, and then started his own electronic improvisation group, so you might say we traded influences. Since the late 1960s I’ve recorded, on and off, a lot of guitar pieces, including the ones on this record, and in the 1980s I wrote a number of melodic orchestra pieces. (One, *Lippershey-Orion*, was performed with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1987.)

I prefer the spelling “gtarz” because it’s shorter and truer to the sound. From the frustration “uv trying tu” teach English overseas to students old “enuf” to ask “wy” (.iz the speling so...) I’ve “bin” trying for years to finish a book on “short fnetc speling.” But I luuz all my frenz wen I even mention it, so just forget I mentioned it. I can’t resist a few digs tho. If you think theses words look funny (i.e., new) take another very close look at the words they replace. Tradition? These are mostly earlier Old English spellings. When I finish the book I’ll go into hiding, selling “Spel as U Lyc,” or “Spelinz a Dirty Tric T Ceep us Dum” T-shirts to make a living...to farmers probably, “cus” that’s ath way they spell anyhow. Benjamin Franklin said they were smarter than we are in spelling. But don’t worry, (people get all upset about these things) I’ll only throw in an occasional “shortnd speling” just to spite Sam Johnson. He said he put old, difficult (time-consuming) spellings in his (our) dictionary “to keep the lower classes in

their place” (and put us behind in life). I’ll keep my “shorts” down to just the “ough” wrds tho—which Teddy Roosevelt tried to get Congress to ban. He failed by just a few votes. You see his “thru” now on expressways, but you won’t in the schools. Schools will never change—that would make things shorter and faster so we could get more education—and that’s not their (limiting) purpose. Both the private and public schools are controlled by parents and outside groups to limit our education. I’ll have to write some complot music to fit in here.

“Altho” I sometimes make electronic instruments, these “Space Guitars” use no electronics, other than amplification. I make new instruments because it’s a good way to make music different than anyone else’s, and to get played without using number painting, splatter, or “the needle’s stuck” techniques—and of course, because they make fascinating new and completely different sounds.

People ask what these instruments look like. Not much. I take them apart and construct new ones for each piece. They’re Cheshire-cat-guitars. All that’s left of normal guitars are smiling strings with a magnetic-mike tooth or two. The different sounds each one makes, and the different playing techniques used, create an entire new organization by themselves — blocks of sound that are held for some time, that slide in different directions, often with a lot of internal movement, with irregular rhythms, tremolos glissandi, trills, fast and slow vibrations, bubbling, bouncing, waving, wobbling, etc. I became more and more aware that part of the fascination these sounds and pieces had for me was that they sound like those worlds that had always fascinated me, of physics and “astro-nomy” (“star-names”—another school rule-destroy meaning with pronunciation, as with speedometer, thermo-meter, etc., the list is “astro-nomical—they

missed one...). Anyhow, the more I read about this fireworks display universe that we ended up in the middle of (“The Incredibly Awesome Show”), the more awesome and interesting and less scary it became.

Will we ever understand and feel at home in it? How can we feel related to something so explosive, far off (hopefully...), and as yet unknown in both the large and the small?

With music we can perhaps enjoy a more human, sensual version of it. Many have described how music does this with the world of feelings — imitating with sounds the tension of our emotions and the sound of our voices. “Humanizing” particle or cosmic worlds by describing them in music is adding these “emotions” and voices” to whole new dynamic worlds we’d never experienced otherwise—esp. in this warmer, more sensual manner. Abstract things like electrons or “the Universe’s Incredibly Fast Particle Transmission Field” can suddenly become an enjoyable experience (hopefully), as music...of all things—as something closer to our own voices and emotions. It’s not real...but nothing is...untinted by us. Is this getting (us) involved? (A standard question.)

The philosopher Susanne Langer might say that music like this could even help toward knowledge—by making direct experience-able symbols or models of things about which we don’t even have clear concepts yet. And certainly we don’t have clear ideas about what’s really “in there” and “out there”—where it’s going and how—where it came from in the first place—or even what’s the best way to find out (if we can).

Mathematicians don’t seem to want to help the public much to relate to the universe. They make physics a math course, difficult, abstract and boring—leaving the public confused and prey to the usual charlatans. They discourage a clearer physical hypothesis because it might complicate their math — while they get so complicated they don’t understand each other. Math-physics has led to many discoveries, but you can’t stop with curved geometry, constants, funny names and colors—they leave too much out—it’s not of interest to anyone outside the math field who wants to know that the actual physical universe might be like in understandable terms.

I like statements like “You can’t understand it if you don’t know the math.” Maybe you don’t if you do. Don’t believe “experts” if they aren’t clear.

Music is something more tangible. I want a similar experience or knowledge of the universe. If it’s something we can’t see, maybe we can hear it—at least something more “hands on” so to speak (with permission)—or “ears-on.” “What are you doing?” “I’m listening.”

### **Music and Extra-Music Knowledge — or, You Don’t Learn Much from Music, but Maybe You Can from the Program**

Music is an experience that’s intense, dynamic, sensual, orgiastic (if they only knew what they were missing—but don’t tell them. I have trouble getting a seat at concerts now), higher (it does sound above us and of an unearthly beauty and perfection)...but we spend a lot of time with it and learn nothing. Now I want to learn something too. What do I want for my money?—to argue particle theories or spelling history at an orgy? But I got some of my most valuable extra (school) knowledge from music programs. I learned to appreciate more of Shakespeare, and Astronomy (I learned the names of the planets from Holst), and metaphysics (from *Francesca da Rimini* and *Zarathustra*), and about the scuttled French revolution from Beethoven (the some women’s rights and the metric system did remain after the betrayal by Napoleon).

But, aside from that, not much information. Only the conformist or official line is believed or allowed as usual.

Information thru art may be the only way to say some things in our “partial-information-society.” We could learn more about the history of science (the good guys), instead of about Kings and other fronts who are just affronts. Science is safer (there’s a good motto). We don’t hate, torture and kill each other over differing physical guesses about the universe (tho sometimes they get upset over the same thing—power). Now that we’re behind everyone in science education, maybe art should help us get more interested in physical explanations—or interested in fields of study or work that might be more practical and beneficial than most of the overpaid things we head for today (even if it didn’t help me—I listened to *The Planets* and became a composer—but at least it’s not an overpaid profession...). You can always promote religion, but other views are scorned that maybe shouldn’t be. There’s information we’re just not getting. It shouldn’t hurt the music if we don’t agree. I enjoy a lot of composers whose background views I don’t share (but I’m open for argument—even tho debate didn’t help totalitarians like Plato think very well.

Measurements here are in the metric system (as in science, medicine, and much industry)—because it’s 10 times easier and 10 times faster — which is why they don’t want us to use it in school.

### **Music and a More Understandable (Physical) Physics**

In these pieces I substitute physical guesses for some of the usual relativity and quantum mysteries. I substitute a physical “ether” (a vibrating magnetic-field) for their abstract empty “space,” a “particle” (which makes waves in the ether) for their inconceivable isolated “particle-wave,” magnetism for an impossible one-way “gravity,” infinity of matter for an impossible “Big-Bang creation out of nothing,” “bands” (electrons and protons plus their magnetic waves) for mysterious, separated quantum orbits, and simple “hand shifts” for unexplainable quantum jumps. I call “charge” (-) the miniscule difference between those electrons and photons that easily interchange with each other inside the atom. It’s my candidate for the smallest particle—“the ether particle” whose like (-) charge keeps the electron out but propels the slightly (+) photons easily thru the whole universe. This is the basis for the purely physical descriptions given for these music programs. My motto is: If it isn’t a physical explanation, try to change it into one, or else, in some cases, run for your life.

1. *Whirling Take-Off*—i.e., electrons whirling around a nucleus. Every atom is a perpetual motion machine, a dynamo, a “charge” storage-battery (thru orbit changes), a valve (with foto cells), and a transformer, changing electrons into photons and visa-versa. It’s a galaxy (and maybe the universe) in miniature. It’s also a spinning magnetic-pie a “magpie”—that, along with the “charge” is the basis of the magnetism that holds the whole universe together—and pulls it together into the explosions that make everything (including us) possible.

The title was suggested by a painter friend, Gregory Gillespie, who heard it as a big disk spinning and taking off. He started me seeing thing instead of just hearing them.

2. *A Bouncing Little People Planet*—A combination of bouncing and staccato talking. A humorous strange people on another planet bounce and talk nervously and then get excited and bounce-talk even faster. Again, it could also represent bouncing atoms or particles, or bubbling molecules.

3. *Space "Gtarz" (Space Guitars)* — Impulse sound-particles shooting away from us thru the tight magnetic-ether medium. The ether could also be like "Silly Space"—which, like silly putty is hard and fast for fast moving particles, and soft and slow for slow particles. There are all speeds and ether consistencies in this piece.

The ether is the universe materialization, diversification, and transport system—the basic particle and the transmitter of the basic (light-speed) vibration—i.e. the vibration of the massive invisible core at the center of, our part at least, of the universe. It's the vibration that you hear underneath in the music, shaping the sounds.

Or these vibrating, reverberating, tense, stringy sounds might the Gigantic Galactic Filaments postulated by Nobel Prize winner, H. Alfvén and his plasma physics group (originally a rock band). They say "poof" to the big bang and drang theory, and "spooof" to its current ala-mode space math. Whatever, the program, this is literally magnetic-field music. These are steel strings vibrating the magnetic field of the magnetic microphone.

4. *A Rocket is a Drum*—A space probe lands on a far off planet and is used as drum by the natives. We'll probably be more informed than this tho, since I doubt they'd be further behind than we are (with all the money and funny groups blocking our learning—esp. about themselves).

5. *Space Train*—A slow, chugging take-off and trip across the universe. Particles (or a whole galaxy) chugging thru crowded "space." On ether tracks? In quantum compartments? Will we ever be able to know the mechanics of moving thru space? Right now it escapes us, and also the reigning mathematicians' willingness to look at the more physical aspects of it that won't fit into their formulas. Do the experimental physicists think enuf? Do the MPs (math-physicists-tinker enuf?).

If quantum or relativity theories defy physical logic, who's wrong? How can photons push thru that soup for 10 million or so heavy years without some help from a propelling ether? (A propelling argument for the ether...)—that 3000,000 K/sec. Constant speed, that could only be insured by a constantly vibrating medium—i.e., the big invisible vibrating black hole cores of a lot of separate universe out there. I think there are a lot of universes, not just one big one. Maybe this train is speeding toward the center of one, off to the side, like we seem to be doing according to some "star-namers." The supposed missing 90% of the universe might be in these black centers. The writer, Dave Barry thinks most of it's in his office. (In that case, the rest is in my garage.)

Things to ponder while listening to the music: maybe we can think of solutions that are more sound—sounder. If we can't see the elementary particles, we can hear them as air molecules. Something "ana-logous." A "LS-Music." "LS" (light speed) is a better term the too ambi-guous "relativistic." We're "relative-tally stupefied, bowing down continually to impossible motion conundrums, geometric simplifications, and irrelevant relative relations (and who wants to be constantly reminded of their relatives?)

6. *Insect Take Over*—Swarms of insects in the air, on land, and then in the air again. Maybe we're the next dinosaurs who give way to some smaller animals like these due to some disaster (like over-population?) Even our pets are over-popping. The Humane Society recommends spaying and neutering. Are we also par of the humane? Here it sounds like the insects have over-populated too. Can the birds then grow to be dinosaurs again with all this food? Then is there another mammal waiting in the bushes for its chance to stand up and grow a brain? Would he discover our old music? (First thing's first.) Would there be "enuf" time? Not if the sun has only a few billion years before it becomes a red Fafner. Tune in tomorrow for the next exciting episode. In the meantime, study philosophy (love of knowledge...supposedly) so we can at least be philosophical about it (as Thales and Charlie Brown are when they say "Aaaugh!"). Or we can play Beethoven's 5th every day—or put up a "muss es?" sign—or to be doubly re-signed, an "Es muss" sign.

7. *Space Storm*—Or maybe just a normal day in a space that's anything but "empty space." It must be an incredible traffic jam...a continual storm of criss-crossing particles and magnetic waves ...of speeding "charges," i.e. "etherons" or "electrons" (-), neutrinos (+-), gravitons (-+)(++), (but I don't think these exist), photons (+++), electrons (-++-), ions, old TV sitcoms — spreading our culture all over the universe. (We'd better wipe out these (EP (earth-persons) before they spread more of that stuff!)—and who knows what else?

One writer says it's lucky we even see the stars withal that traffic out there. A lot of these particles must collide with each other in the cosmic dodge-em game—esp. with the extra buffering caused by flare-ups, blow-ups, spinning synchrotron effects black hole burps, etc. Woosh! "I say, Holmes, what kind of particle was that" "Elementary, Watson." Have a good (sound) trip.

—Allan Bryant, 1995

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## Production Notes

Revised and expanded from the CRI LP (SD 366)