



Bio information: **ROB MAZUREK / EXPLODING STAR ORCHESTRA**

Title: ***GALACTIC PARABLES: VOLUME 1*** (Cuneiform Rune 409/410) Format: 3xLP / 2xCD / DIGITAL DOWNLOAD

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FILE UNDER: JAZZ / CREATIVE MUSIC / EXPERIMENTAL

**EXPLODING STAR ORCHESTRA, the Mothership of Creative Titan ROB MAZUREK'S Sonic Universe,
Celebrates its 10th Anniversary by Releasing its Most Ambitious Recording to Date:
A Double CD, Triple LP Recorded by an International Cast on Two Continents, Titled
*GALACTIC PARABLES: VOLUME 1***

– A 21st Century Sonic Tour de Force Which Evokes the Spirits of Sun Ra and Coltrane, the AACM and Miles –

Sun Ra and his Arkestra traveled the space waves from planet to planet. **John Coltrane** soared through interstellar space's vast outer reaches. The protean cornetist, composer, multi-media artist and conceptualist **Rob Mazurek** and his **Exploding Star Orchestra** are in the midst of a similarly bold adventure, an epic journey exploring the nebular forms, pulsar beats and translucent textures emanating from the talent-laden ensemble's volatile interactions.

Exploding Star Orchestra's latest enthralling dispatch, *Galactic Parables: Volume 1*, is Mazurek's most ambitious recording yet. Released in both a double CD format and limited edition vinyl complete with gorgeous three-LP gatefold, the album documents the suite's world premiere at Sardinia's **Sant'Anna Arresi Jazz Festival 2013**, where the work was commissioned, and its expanded reprise several months later at the **Chicago Cultural Center**. *Galactic Parables: Volume 1* is slated for release by Cuneiform on May 26, 2015.

While *Galactic Parables: Volume 1* is a self-contained cosmos, marked by colliding melodic lines and startlingly beautiful passages, as the title indicates it's part of a larger work. Ever since Exploding Star Orchestra's debut recording, 2007's *We Are All From Somewhere Else (Thrill Jockey)*, Mazurek has been gradually building an epic science fiction opera inspired by the writings of **Samuel R. Delany** and **Stanisław Lem**. With *Galactic Parables* his vast speculative realm is coming more clearly into focus with an apocalyptic vision of alternate universes, machine reproduction run amuck, and the colonization of distant planets. With its evocative text and recitation by **Damon Locks**, whose voice and electronics pervade the album, *Galactic Parables* "is the first record where we're getting close to hitting on the libretto for this future opera," says Mazurek, who by both inclination and geography is linked to a constellation of Chicago avant-garde pioneers.

"Sun Ra is a gigantic influence, and so is the physicality and depth of the music of the **AACM**," he says. "They coined the phrase '**Ancient to the Future**' and that's something I've been close to and drawn inspiration from. But I don't think it's an intrinsically Chicago thing. It's more universal. This music isn't just about the future or the past. It's about the whole evolution of a species, the adaptation of an organism told through sound."

Even for an artist as dauntingly prolific, polymathically creative and generally disinclined to follow music business formulas as Mazurek, releasing two renditions of what's ostensibly the same body of music might seem eccentric. At least until investigating the retelling of the organically evolving *Galactic Parables*, which reflects the way that he "changed the whole DNA of the suite" after its premiere, "weaving together new elements and switching around parts," he says. "A lot of the written music is the same but it morphed into something else, with everything from the personnel and the emotions of the room twisting it in a different realm."

You can hear the way Mazurek reconceived the music on the first track, "**Free Agents of Sound**," which telescopes out on the premiere, riding waves of drums and percussion, while in Chicago, "**Free Agents**" obeys the centrifugal dance of his gleaming cornet and **Nicole Mitchell**'s darting flute. The centerpiece of both concerts is "**Make Way to the City**" and "**The Arc of Slavery #72**," which flow into each other at Sardinia, moving from bristling outbursts to gently attenuating waves. In Chicago, they emerge as separate chapters, with "The Ark" sailing into treacherous climes.

There's a bold, prophetic quality to the text and music, and it's not a surprise to find that the album is dedicated to the memory of the powerhouse poet **Amiri Baraka**, who heard the band in Italy and stepped back into his **Leroi Jones** shoes as one of jazz's most incisive critics to declare "They've absorbed all the things that are relevant so they can take all of that and make their own statement." A poet would appreciate a libretto that brims with haunting, epigrammatic pronouncements like "Ghosts are not the spirits of the dead but the force of things undone."

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Ultimately what makes *Galactic Parables* so enthralling on both the flight into the cosmos and the return journey (via Chicago) is that the Exploding Star Orchestra brings together a creatively charged cast of improvisers. Pianist **Angelica Sanchez**, guitarist **Jeff Parker**, drummer **John Herndon**, bass guitarist **Matthew Lux**, and reed expert **Matthew Bauder** (on tenor saxophone and clarinet) performed at both concerts. The Sardinian flight also features drummer **Chad Taylor**, and the brilliant Brazilian tandem of **Guilherme Granado** on keyboard, samplers, synth and voice, and **Mauricio Takara** on cavaquinho, electronics and percussion. While she didn't join the Sardinia endeavor, the great flutist **Nicole Mitchell**, who shares Mazurek's love of science fiction, joined the Chicago proceedings to brilliant effect.

All of these musicians have performed and recorded together under Mazurek's leadership in various ensembles and configurations, including several **Underground** combos, the **Pulsar Quartet**, and **Black Cube SP**. In many ways, Exploding Star Orchestra is the mothership, the "conceptual, compositional and philosophical center of all my work," Mazurek says. The band came together in 2005 when the **Chicago Cultural Center** and the Jazz Institute commissioned Mazurek to create a vehicle that could encompass the disparate styles and ideologies of avant-garde music unfolding in Chicago.

Conceived as a one-off event, Exploding Star took on a life of its own, and has continued to evolve reflecting the transient nature of musicians' lives. Each subsequent Exploding Star Orchestra project has featured an evolving cast of players, starting with 2008's **Bill Dixon with Exploding Star Orchestra (Thrill Jockey)**, a collaborative date that turned out to be one of the last recordings by the legendary free jazz trumpeter. In 2010, **Delmark** released the ensemble's third album **Stars Have Shapes**, which brought Mazurek's shimmering, translucent orchestral sensibility into sharper focus. *Galactic Parables*, released in 2015 during the Exploding Star Orchestra's 10th anniversary year, brings Mazurek one giant step closer to realizing his oversized vision.

"As the 10 years moved on I thought why does it have to be tied to a region?" Mazurek says. "Nicole Mitchell and Jeff Parker moved to LA, but I want them in the band whenever they can make it. I love Angelica's playing. Let's bring her into the fold. From São Paulo, I love making music with Guilherme and Mauricio. Let's add their unique view. Now it's more international and has the capability to expand even further. The idea is not to just keep creating something you know is going to work. I've always been one to keep changing."

Change is one of the few constants in Mazurek's musical universe. A polymorphously creative bandleader, he performs in a wide array of settings, from his highly interactive duo with **Chicago Underground** drummer Chad Taylor to his latest sextet **Black Cube SP**, which debuted on the emotionally charged 2014 release **Return the Tides: Ascension Suite and Holy Ghost (Cuneiform)**. He maintains his talent-laden **Rob Mazurek Octet**, which was captured most recently on 2013's **Skull Sessions (Cuneiform)**. In recent years he's also collaborated extensively with tenor saxophone legend **Pharoah Sanders** in **Pharoah and the Underground**, which released the CD **Spiral Mercury** and the LP **Primitive Jupiter (Clean Feed)**.

Raised in the Chicago area, Mazurek studied at the **Bloom School of Jazz** after high school, and launched the Chicago Underground workshop at the storied jazz club **The Green Mill** in 1994. Eventually the workshop gave birth to the **Chicago Underground Collective**, an ensemble that recorded several albums for **Delmark** and **Thrill Jockey** featuring many of the scene's rising stars, including Jeff Parker and drummer Chad Taylor. An essential catalyst on the international scene, Mazurek collaborates with a wide cross section of leading figures in jazz, rock and improvised music, including Pharoah Sanders, **Bill Dixon**, **Roscoe Mitchell**, **Yusef Lateef**, **Mike Ladd**, and **Nana Vasconcelos**.

Increasingly recognized as a creative force outside of the United States, he was awarded France's prestigious residency at the **Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud** in 2005, which gave Mazurek the opportunity to hone his interest in multi-media works. The following year he debuted the **São Paulo Underground**, an inventive ensemble that has released four acclaimed albums. More than a prolific composer, he's increasingly combined his sonic sojourns with multi-media projects, often with the support of major arts institutions.

In 2010, Mazurek received the **Commissioning Music/USA** grant from **New Music USA** for a multi-media work developed in collaboration with video artist/choreographer **Marianne Kim**. In 2011, the **Jazz & Wine Festival in Cormons, Italy** commissioned him to compose the "**Violent Orchid Suite**" and the Sant'Anna Aressi Jazz Festival in Sardinia commissioned the "**Transgressions Suite**." He topped off a highly productive 2012 by being voted musician of the year by **Musica Jazz**, Italy's top jazz magazine. He also received the 2013 **Helen Coburn Meier and Tim Meier Arts Achievement Award** and was featured on the cover of *The Wire* magazine for the second time in his 30 years of music making history.

Whatever project he's working on, Mazurek remains transfixed by the ideas he's exploring in Exploding Star Orchestra, concepts that first came into view with **Android Love Cry (Family Vineyard)**, the 2007 album by his improv power trio **Tigersmilk** with **Jason Roebke** and **Dylan van der Schyff**. That's when he conjured **Helder Velazquez Smith**, an octogenarian author, alchemist, magician, painter, filmmaker, and philosopher living in the Brazilian capital of Brasilia (forever the city of the future). "Android Love Cry" is one chapter in Smith's masterwork **The Book of Sound**, "and the idea is I'm compiling this book in real time," Mazurek says. "I've been completing notes, paintings, symbols, films, all this stuff that will make this imaginary writer's existence come to life. And out of this book comes this text, **Galactic Parables: Volume 1**, which is just a slice of a thousand parables to come."

The universe is a very big place. **Rob Mazurek** is doing his part to fill it with glorious sound.

For more information on Rob Mazurek / Exploding Star Orchestra:
www.robmazurek.com – www.cuneiformrecords.com