



STORY AND PHOTO BY JENNIFER FISHER

VISIT FROM A WOODWINDS-WIELDING ALIEN

NIK TURNER PERPETUATES HIS VERSION OF THE HAWKWIND LEGACY

Hawkwind alumnus Nik Turner, 77 years young, descended from the cosmos for the North American leg of his tour with like-minded acts Hedersleben and the Velcro Lewis Group, both accomplished ensembles in their own right.

The Velcro Lewis Group, touting itself as “Earth’s premier acid-rock, space-funk septet,” began the Oct. 23 show at Reggie’s club, Chicago, drawing from new fifth album *Amnesia Haze*—an overtly political musical commentary on Donald Trump’s presidential election. With instrumentation including washboard, Theremin and synths, the band opened a sonic interstellar gateway for Hedersleben.

Founded in a German village by Nicky Garratt (U.K. Subs) and Uve Mullrich (Embryo), Hedersleben subsequently relocated its krautrock/space rock mission to the San Francisco Bay Area. Fourth album *Orbit* is refreshing, dreamy, melodic and full of atmosphere, as was this live performance. For both bands the immersive psychedelic light show was thoroughly hallucinogenic.

After a brief intermission, Turner joined Hedersleben as his backing band. And so it began, selections from 1973 Hawkwind classic *Space Ritual* launching the intergalactic odyssey. “Born to Go,” “Time We Left This World Today,” “The Black Corridor” and “Space is Deep” surged forth with patented pulsating rhythms as audience members responded in kind, moving to the irresistible flow.

Setting aside the Turner/Dave Brock legal wrangling over name rights, this was Hawkwind reincarnate with trademark accoutrements: The unmistakable otherworldly sound and visuals ... that goggled headgear with tendrils ... This was going to be good—very good.

“Opa-Loka,” “Children of the Sun” and “Sonic Attack” emerged. Cosmic flute soared above insistent throbbing beats and then, “Master of the Universe”—“*I am the center of the universe/The wind of time is blowing through me*”—could it get any better? In counterpoint to the rhythms was Turner’s resonant saxophone. “Orgone Accumulator” and the

mind-blowing “Brainstorm.” The crowd hypnotically swayed. As the set drew to an end, a near-bluesy “Hurry On Sundown” brought us back to some semblance of grounding before getting spirited off again by encore “Silver Machine.” Then, it was over.

After the show we joined Mr. Turner as he tenderly, if not affectionately, disassembled his flute and packed his saxophone. He talked about living in a rural Wales alternative community since the mid 1980s, about his love of nature (he gardens) and concern for our planet’s future.

After leaving Hawkwind in 1977, he trekked to Egypt and recorded three hours of solo flute music in the burial chamber of ancient Egyptian monarch Cheops inside the Great Pyramid of Giza. He shared thoughts on being influenced by Egypt’s ancient *Book of the Dead*, about sun hymns in tombs and Greek sun god Helios. We discussed Pharaoh Akhenaten and related esoterica.

Nik hinted that, just maybe, he is not of this world. On the earthly plane his influences have ranged from Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Billy Cobham to Stravinsky. He recalled a lesser-known chapter in his career: the evolution of garage punk/space-rock acts Inner City Unit and offshoot The Imperial Pompadours (with Hawkwind cover artist Barney Bubbles), which issued now-rare 1982 album *Ersatz*. He seemed proud of this.

He misses early Hawkwind bassist Ian “Lemmy” Kilmister, who was expelled from the band shortly before he left. He is most fond of ‘70s song “Master of the Universe,” a reworked version appearing on his latest solo recording, *Life in Space* (Cleopatra/Purple Pyramid Records). This work is worth investigating, opening track “End of the World” an evocative gem. Turner also appears as part of ad-hoc trio Chromium Hawk Machine on new album *Annunaki* (Black Widow Records).

Whether in the studio playing live, he remains a timeless force on flute and saxophone. In private he is gently soft-spoken and impressively erudite, a living progressive legend. 

