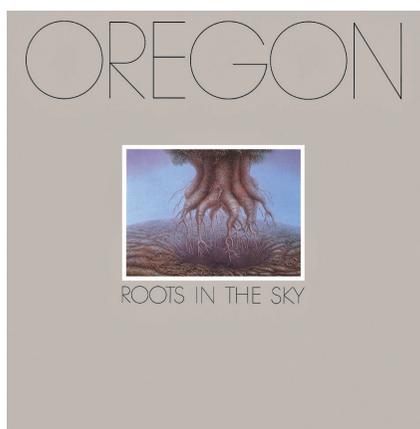


# OREGON

## ROOTS IN THE SKY SPEAKERS CORNER



"We're excited about what we do. We always feel we have to do better. It's a wonderful thing"

**A** jazz group that walks a different path from the mainstream. The modern line-up is a tad different but this LP featured guitarist/pianist Ralph Towner, double bassist Glen Moore and percussionist/sitar player Collin Walcott along with oboist Paul McCandless.

Before the formation of Oregon, the first three members joined the Paul Winter Consort in 1970. As Towner recalled: "We would tour for weeks on end and play together, all four of us writing together in a station wagon".

Back in New York City during the late sixties, running through to the early seventies, the city was a centre of activity. Legendary bands such as Weather Report and Mahavishnu were active, while other musicians were buzzing around and about to form a hive of creativity.

"I remember being in a group with Jimmy Garrison, Coltrane's bass player and we were rehearsing at Chick Corea's apartment" said Towner. "We were all living pretty much in the same area – you could afford to do that then".

So when the guys were hired by Paul Winter they had an interesting concept of music. "But he was doing interpretations of various music – hardly any original composition. We played adaptations and arrangements of Brazilian music and Renaissance music and some Baroque things and some other pop things – Joni Mitchell kind of things. And so it was a real potpourri of styles".

Towner began writing his own arrangements to this music, gaining experience all of the time but integrating an oboe and tabla into the mix. Which lead eventually towards Oregon and the use of a wide array of instruments to form a unique sound, everything from a flügelhorn to a tin flute.

The bottom line was an ensemble playing a hybrid style of jazz, rock, free jazz – and more. Even a sprinkling of pop found its way into the music.

This 1978 LP release was typically eclectic and wide-ranging. The diverse styles touched on classical music as well as Asian and African modes of music with the obvious jazz vibes gluing the whole lot together.

"The compositions are not always standard jazz forms", said Towner. "I started writing

sectional kind of things which would involve the improvisations on different material rather than have everyone playing on the same chord changes. Trying to make more long forms – that basically is one of our identifying factors, along with those different rhythms – not always swing time. If the music wasn't good, we would have stopped quite awhile ago", said Towner.

When it comes to creating the music, Towner did and does most of the writing. "In a funny way, I'm the musical director of the group" he said. "Without all the parts working together, the group wouldn't function. It's a kind of recipe for a small village. It's not a bad example of how to get along. We give each other a lot of room".

And this is the shocking thing about Oregon...they get on! There's none of the inter-group jealousies here, no arguing, no bad feelings, no simmering resentments and none of that petty, moody, sniping stuff. It's quite refreshing. "No-one's tried to inhibit another's individual aspirations" said Towner. "There's a lot of generosity that way. The thing about it is it's very serious and involved with the music when we do play. No-one's doing it because it's just a job. It's a real, living thing and we still get very excited about it. After every concert, we talk about it. We're excited about what we do. We always feel we have to do better. It's a wonderful thing. It's like an incredible kind of brotherhood.

So, it's a group that's not going to disband. It would be like disbanding from your parents. It's truly a family but not a restrictive or suffocating one. It's a good model for relationships in that there's a lot of respect and it's very relaxed. It's very unusual in that it's really great people, not just musicians. They are wonderful people to hang out with".

This newly reissued version of 'Roots in the Sky' has been splendidly reissued by Speakers Corner ([www.speakerscornerrecords.com](http://www.speakerscornerrecords.com)) as it has been remastered from the original master tapes and pressed by one of the best pressing plants in the world, Pallas in Germany. This edition is a true duplicate because the sleeve is unadorned by zip codes and other modern ephemera which can get in the way of the experience. A superb edition.

**PR**