

Frank Lavelle's Fearless Starlight Band

By: [Emily Votaw](#)

Posted on: [Monday, June 19, 2017](#)



When Athens, OH attorney Frank Lavelle was about 10 years old, his parents bought him a play-by-number electric organ. Ever since, Lavelle has been interested in making music, even if it hasn't been his main career focus.

Over the course of the past two years, Lavelle has released three cohesive albums under the general moniker [The Fearless Starlight Band](#). Lavelle serves as the principal songwriter, keyboardist, and occasional guitarist, while various collections of producers and musicians, (the overwhelming majority of which are associated in some way, shape, or form to the Ohio University School of Media Arts and Studies,) provide the accompaniment and the finishing touches. Most of those students are involved in the Music Production – Recording Industry Program within the Media School. Everyone who contributed to the project's ongoing output is named in the liner notes of each CD, as well as on the band's website.

A post on the outfit's website jokes that when a young child informs his parents that he wants to be a musician when he grows up, they respond, "Okay, but you can't be both!" It's this same youthful, energized spirit that Lavelle brings to his off-work passion project.

"When I finally got to the point (in my career) where I could slow down enough to record some music, I did," said Lavelle in an interview with WOUB last month, sitting outside his historic home on the banks of the glistening Ohio River. "One thing led to another, and before long I was jamming with some talented young guys who are guitarists and producers. This project turned out to be the most fun I've been able to have in my off hours for a long time."

May 22, The Fearless Starlight band released *When the Stars Align*, a set of songs that explore everything from low-fi psychedelia to lyrics about praying to the universe and exploring the dichotomy between agony and ecstasy. The cover of the work features a photo of the Gaza pyramids awash in the dark of night, complete with a sparkling collection of stars above them. The outfit's other releases very much follow the general gist of the most recent, playing frequently with interdimensional or celestial themes.

"There is a lot of emotion involved in some of the tunes, and the idea is that the music is kind of ethereal – I just tap into it and go with it," said Lavelle. "I don't know where it comes from – but I don't think that any artist knows exactly where their work comes from. More than anything, it has to do with a particular state of mind – I have done a little bit of reading on it, and it's called the 'alpha state of mind,' where your mind is racing a bit and you're working to get things done and everything jives together."

So far as the musical themes, Lavelle said that he isn't exactly being entirely serious in his work with them.

"We only tackle the big themes, like eternity and infinity – and quite frankly, a lot of it is tongue in cheek," he said.

Lavelle described the band's sound as "music within music," noting that he works to build the songs up, adding pieces of harmony and melody throughout the recording process.

"The main thing that has changed (about recording music), since I was younger, is the technology," he said. "The equipment that Schoonover has is much better than

anything that I have in my home recording studio, and as we go along, we learn more and more about the technical aspects of the music we are making.”

With that equipment, Lavelle has enjoyed discovering new ways to utilize sound, from eschewing the timbre of a particular note to making a Steinway piano sound on the same piece of equipment that can produce a solid Moog synthesizer sound.

The Fearless Starlight Band, by name, does seem like the kind of outfit who would toy around with organic and synthetic sounds. However, Lavelle said that his musical project wasn’t always going to be named as such.

“When I decided to do this, I got to Googling around, and I saw that many of the band names that I was interested in using were already in use,” said Lavelle. “So, I settled on ‘The Fearless Starlight Band’ because the idea is that only the fearless starlight reaches Earth.”

The first songs The Fearless Starlight Band worked with were based off of scraps of songs that Lavelle had crafted over the years, what he calls “beginnings of songs,” consisting mainly of chief melodies and a hooks.

“I couldn’t really tell you any of the big names in music right now, but growing up, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, were all influences,” said Lavelle, who also cited Elvis Costello and even The Velvet Underground as being partially responsible for The Fearless Starlight Band sound. “There are apps that you can use to find out if a song has been recorded before, and we’ve tested all of our songs, and they are original. But, honestly, everything goes back to Beethoven and the masters. There are only so many musical sounds in the western hemisphere – 12 basic tones, I believe. And there are 16 basic tones in the Eastern hemisphere. All you can do is a variation on something. Sometimes you just hear a silly radio jingle and a part of it stays with you.”

The Fearless Starlight Band is planning on taking a bit of a break this summer, with the action picking up again this fall when Ohio University commences with fall semester 2017.

“It’s so interesting. People will sometimes ask me what I ultimately want to do with this project, but honestly, as I’ve gotten older, I’ve learned that it’s just important to be able to do what you want to do,” said Lavelle. “I have always wanted to make music, and I think that I have learned what actually doing it is, and I love it.”