

A Masterclass With The Blue Öyster Cult

Although the worldwide coronavirus lockdown has all but killed the live music scene for the duration, along with theatre and other performing arts, rock musicians have found a workaround - going on-line.

On June 20, Blue Öyster Cult will be hosting a limited interactive masterclass for only 25 people at \$200 each. Tickets are available from [their official website](#). For the rest of us, there is plenty of footage of the band on-line, at YouTube in particular. Unless you are of a certain age, these classic American rockers may not be familiar to you. Their last album was released way back in 2001, but they go back much further. They were still touring up to the lockdown and have dates pencilled in for next year.



Although like most hard rock and heavy metal bands they are album-oriented, they released a fair number of singles, the best known and best of which are *Don't Fear The Reaper* from 1976; *Godzilla*, 1977; *Shooting Shark*, 1983; and *Astronomy*, 1986.

Many of the band's songs tend to be enigmatic, but some are explained by [Songfacts](#). *Then Came The Last Days Of May*, was also released as a single; a modern murder ballad based on a true story, the [live version](#) with extended soloing is simply magnificent and much to be preferred. Although the band's origins can be traced to 1967, they have performed under the name Blue Öyster Cult only since 1971. Only!

Like many time-serving rock bands, there have been quite a few changes of line-up, and some members are no longer with us, like founder member Allen Lanier who died in August 2013 aged 67. Lanier played guitar and keyboards, but Buck Dharma (pictured) and Eric Bloom, also founder members, are still very much alive at 72 and 75 respectively; it is they who will be holding the masterclass.

Rock family trees have long become complex, so here is an interesting double connection. Many other bands and artists have been performing lockdown concerts, including [Ritchie Blackmore and Candice Night](#) from their Long Island home. Candice was born there, and so was Blue Öyster Cult. Before he and Candice formed Blackmore's Night, Ritchie was best known for his work with Deep Purple and Rainbow. Bobby Rondinelli played drums for Rainbow 1980-83, and later for Blue Öyster Cult, 1997-2004.

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