**Eno, Brian**

**[Born Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno (1948-)]**

Stephen Gibson

Brian Eno is one of the foremost producers of electronic music in the latter half of the 20th Century. He is primarily known as the founder of ambient music, for his juxtapositions of rock with avant-garde experimentalism, and for his production of several New Wave bands in the 1970s and 80s.

Originally trained as an artist under Roy Ascott, Eno’s career changed abruptly when he joined the glam rock band Roxy Music in 1971 as the synthesizer player, bringing a raw experimental sound to the group. Famously describing himself as a ‘non-musician’ he broke away as a solo performer in 1973, embarking on a series of remarkable experimental electronic rock albums, culminating in *Another Green World* (1975), arguably the peak of his output.

Around this time he developed the idea of ambient music, in part with guitarist Robert Fripp. The two released what is usually described as the first ambient record *No Pussyfooting* (1973) based on a series of tape-loop experiments with Fripp’s guitar. In 1975 Eno released *Discrete Music,* arguably the purest example of his ambient output, as it exhibited only the slowest discernible change in volume, melody and timbre over the course of the minimalist album-side title track. A series of *Ambient-*titled releases followed including *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978), now considered a classic of the genre.

In the late 1970s Eno gave up live performance and concentrated on the studio as an ‘instrument.’ This led to a number of well-known collaborations on David Bowie’s Berlin albums, several Talking Heads releases, and a number of U2 albums. His work with David Byrne *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1981) pre-figured sampling in its abundant use of found-materials. In the 1980s and 90s Eno continued to release his own solo work but these failed to have the impact of his 70s output. He had a return to form in the 2000s as his interest in generative music led to a number of multimedia projects including *77 Million Paintings* (2006).

Essential listening:

1. Fripp and Eno, *No Pussyfooting,* <http://www.last.fm/music/Fripp+&+Eno/No+Pussyfooting>

2. Brian Eno, *Another Green World,* <http://www.last.fm/music/Brian+Eno/Another+Green+World>

3. Brian Eno, *Ambient 1: Music for Airports,* <http://www.last.fm/music/Brian+Eno/Ambient+1:+Music+for+Airports>

4. Brian Eno and David Byrne, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*

<http://www.last.fm/music/Brian+Eno+&+David+Byrne/My+Life+in+the+Bush+of+Ghosts>

Further Viewing:

# Brian Eno, *The Man Who Fell To Earth* [DVD] [2011] [NTSC], Produced by Sexy Intellectual.

# This DVD presents interviews with Eno and many of his collaborators, as well as live and studio footage of him.

Further Reading:

# Toop, D. (2001) *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds,* London: Serpent’s Tail.

# This volume collects interviews with a number of ambient artists including Brian Eno. It serves as a good general introduction to the genre.