


# STARDUST SONATA

The background of the image is a deep space scene filled with numerous stars of varying sizes and colors, primarily blue and white. Overlaid on this background are several abstract geometric shapes, specifically triangles and trapezoids, which appear to be cut out from a dark, translucent material. These shapes overlap each other and are oriented at different angles. The colors of the shapes correspond to the colors of the nebulae and galaxies in the background, creating a cohesive visual theme.

STEPHEN RODDY

The background of the entire image is a deep space scene featuring a dense cluster of stars. On the left side, there is a prominent, wispy blue nebula. On the right side, a single star is shown with a distinct white starburst effect around it.

Credits:

Music written and performed by Stephen Roddy.  
Recorded and produced at Lava Wall Studios between January and March of 2016.

Artwork elements:

Front cover background is the Small Magellanic Cloud Galaxy Credit: X-ray- NASA/CXC/Univ. Potsdam/L. Oskinova, et al.; Optical- NASA/STScI; Infrared- NASA/JPL-Caltech.

Left side of the star is NGC 1850 super star cluster in the Dorado constellation. Credit: NASA, ESA and N. Bastian (Donostia International Physics Center); Processing: Gladys Kober (NASA/Catholic University of America).

Right side of the star is the NGC 2174 H II emission nebula in the constellation Orion.  
Credit: NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA).

Stardust Sonata is both a tribute and lament to David Bowie in ritual ambient form. It was recorded in the winter of 2016 shortly after the release of Blackstar and Bowie's premature death. The six tracks feature ambient soundscapes driven by electric guitars and occasional electronic elements that rise and fall in a network of interlocking waves. The sonic framework explored on Stardust Sonata was informed by Bowie's work with Brian Eno on the first two instalments of the Berlin trilogy: Low(1977) and Heroes (1977). Side two of those records feature rich and meticulously crafted soundscapes which provided inspiration for the approach used here.

The final track on Low titled Subterraneans features reversed electric guitar lines interwoven by Bowie and guitarist Carlos Alomar through lush synth arrangements by Eno and Paul Buckmaster.

Track 7 of Heroes, Sense of Doubt, features waves of filtered noise washing over a descending four-note piano motif from Bowie and Eno's rich synth textures. The result is a kind of desolate landscape rendered in sound.

There is an even more acute sense of doom and hopelessness that pervades Neuköln, track 9 of Heroes. This is thanks to both Robert Fripp's menacing guitar lines and Bowie's wailing saxophone lament which help to represent the experience of Turkish immigrants to the Neukölln region of Berlin.


Stardust Sonata forgoes traditional rhythm and percussion opting instead to play on the lamenting aspects of Low and Heroes, allowing a sense of rhythm to emerge naturally from the materials. Each piece uses digital analogues of classic tape manipulation methods, along with the biting distortion processes, granularisation and buffer processing, cavernous reverbs, and powerful time-stretching techniques to transform fully improvised electric guitar performances into fully realised pieces.

My first musical memory is of listening to The Man Who Sold The World on vinyl in the front room of our old house. His music has been omnipresent ever since. My father's total obsession and devotion to Bowie ensured that every album release was an event akin to a visit from a mysterious Uncle dropping in to say hi between adventures. His death brought a real sense of loss and an acute awareness that something important was now absent, and in its place was a void; a concrete yet intangible nothingness.

I sat down to record the series of improvised guitar laments to explore this strange absence and the results provide the basis for tracks here. In anticipation of Blackstar's release, I had been experimenting with signal chains for guitar that would allow me to recall some of the magic of the Berlin trilogy for a series of pieces I had planned. Instead, I recorded the Stardust Sonata. Each track would begin with the improvisation of some chordal structures. These would then be processed and manipulated in time to create the rich underlying soundbeds that provide the shifting molten bedrock of each piece. Additional passes would then weave improvised guitar lines throughout these textures to build up intricate soundworlds. Talking years after the recording of Heroes, Bowie's producer Tony Visconti described Fripp's contributions to that album's title track as the "Celestial Fripp Sound", a quality I attempted to recall and elaborate upon in both the performance and production of Stardust Sonata.

The album art here is a spin on the cover of Blackstar that integrates actual photographs of celestial bodies. It highlights that the infinite void of outer space, one of Bowie's most recognisable themes while being a field of near-total nothingness, is also a place of overwhelming beauty and wonder.

Stephen Roddy  
March 22nd 2024  
Cork City



A nebula with intricate, wispy structures of blue, green, and brown against a dark background. A dense cluster of stars is visible in the upper left, while a bright, star-like point of light dominates the center-left. The right side features a prominent, curved, translucent blue structure.

Loomings	04:28
Stardust Sonata	08:41
Glorious Friend	08:45
Lamenting the Deep	11:08
Stardust Sonata Reprise	07:56
Last Fracture	07:57