

= Never Let Me Down =

Never Let Me Down is the seventeenth studio album by David Bowie , released in April 1987 by EMI America . Bowie conceived the album as the foundation for a theatrical world tour , writing and recording most of the songs in Switzerland . He considered the record a return to rock ' n ' roll music . Three singles were released from the album , " Day @-@ In Day @-@ Out " , " Time Will Crawl " and " Never Let Me Down " , which all reached the UK Top 40 .

One of Bowie 's better @-@ selling albums , Never Let Me Down was certified Gold by the RIAA in early July 1987 , less than three months after its release date , and charted in the top 10 in several European countries , although it only reached number 34 on the US charts . Despite its commercial success , this album was poorly received by fans and critics , who often regard the mid @-@ to @-@ late 1980s as a low point of creativity and musical integrity for Bowie . Bowie later distanced himself from the album , but admitted a fondness for many of the songs and eventually remixed the track " Time Will Crawl " ( one of his all @-@ time favourites ) for inclusion on his career retrospective release , iSelect ( 2008 ) .

In support of this album , Bowie embarked on the Glass Spider Tour , a world tour that was at that point the biggest , most theatrical and most elaborate tour he had undertaken in his career . The tour , like the album it supported , was commercially successful but critically panned . The critical failure of the album and tour were factors that led Bowie to look for a new way to motivate himself creatively , leading him to create the band Tin Machine in 1989 and to retire his back catalogue from live performances during his 1990 Sound + Vision Tour . Bowie did not release another solo album until Black Tie White Noise in 1993 .

= = Album development = =

Following the rise in fame and success from his 1983 album Let 's Dance and its subsequent Serious Moonlight Tour , Bowie felt disconnected from his new found large fan base , and after the poor reception of Tonight ( 1984 ) , he was looking to make the next album differently . As a result , Bowie said he wanted to return to recording with a small rock group like he had early in his career , and that he made the album as a " move back to rock ' n ' roll music . Very directly . " Bowie felt that the sound and style of his new album was reminiscent of his album Scary Monsters ( 1980 ) and was less like its immediate predecessors .

Bowie spent the middle of 1986 in his home in Switzerland writing the songs with his friend Iggy Pop . Bowie wrote Never Let Me Down with the intention of performing the songs in a theatrical show . He then recorded a few demos with Erdal K?z?İçay before working on the album with the full band . For the first time since his Scary Monsters album , Bowie played instruments on the record in addition to singing . For some tracks on the album , Bowie played keyboards , synthesizer , rhythm guitar and on two of the album 's tracks ( " New York 's in Love " and " ' 87 and Cry " ) , he played lead guitar .

The album took three months to write and record . Bowie acknowledged that the songs on the album lacked a cohesive musical style , which he claimed reflected his eclectic musical tastes at the time , and stated that the album was " a reflection of all the styles of writing I 've used over the last few years . "

= = Song development = =

Bowie wrote the album 's lead track " Day @-@ In Day @-@ Out " because of his concern about the treatment of the homeless in the US , and he wanted to make a statement about it . Some networks banned the song 's video , which Bowie found ludicrous . This track was also the lead single for the album . A version of the song sung in Spanish was released in 2007 when the " Day @-@ In Day @-@ Out " EP was released digitally .

" Time Will Crawl " , which Bowie named as his favourite track from the album , was inspired by events from the Chernobyl disaster and the idea that someone from ones ' own neighborhood could

be responsible for the end of the world . Bowie said his vocals on this song " owed a lot to Neil Young " , and noted that the variety of voices he used on the album were a nod to the musicians who had influenced him in the past . Bowie performed the song for the BBC show Top of the Pops , although that performance has never been aired . This track was the second single released from the album .

The title track , " Never Let Me Down " , is about Bowie 's long @-@ time personal assistant , Coco Schwab . Bowie wrote the song as a direct reference to his relationship with Coco as a counterpoint to the rest of the songs on the album , which he felt were mostly allegorical . The song was the last one written for the album , written and recorded in one day during the last week of mixing the album at New York 's Power Station studios . Bowie attributed his vocal performance on this track to John Lennon . Bowie 's performance of this song for the Top of the Pops was shown on the first airing of the US version of the show . This track was re @-@ recorded and released as the third single from the album . One reviewer later called it one of Bowie 's " most underrated songs . "

Bowie called the song " Beat of Your Drum " a Lolita song , a " reflection on young girls ... ' Christ , she ? s only 14 years old , but jail ? s worth it ! ' "

The song " Zeroes " , which Rolling Stone magazine called the most heartening and successful track on the album , is , according to Bowie , a nostalgia trip : " I wanted to put in every 60s cliché I could think of ! ' Stopping and preaching and letting love in , ' all those things . I hope there 's a humorous undertone to it . But the subtext is definitely that the trappings of rock are not what they 're made out to be . "

The track " Glass Spider " is a kind of mythological story based on a documentary Bowie had seen about black widow spiders that said that the spiders lay the skeletons of their prey out on their webs . Bowie also thought that the Glass Spider 's web would make a good enclosure for the tour , thus giving the supporting tour its name and stage dressing .

Actor Mickey Rourke asked Bowie to be involved in one of the songs , the two having met in London where Rourke was based while filming the movie A Prayer for the Dying . Bowie had him perform the mid @-@ song rap to the song " Shining Star ( Makin ' My Love ) . " Bowie jokingly referred to Rourke 's performance as " method rapping " . Bowie described the song as one that " reflects back @-@ to @-@ street situations , and how people are trying to get together in the face of so many disasters and catastrophes , socially around them , never knowing if they 're going to survive it themselves . The one thing they have got to cling on to is each other ; although it might resolve into something terrible , it 's the only thing that they 've got . It ? s just a little love song coming out of that environment . " He rejected the notion that his " high , little " voice ( which he attributed to Smokey Robinson ) in the song was a new character ( to follow behind Ziggy Stardust or the Thin White Duke ) , instead saying it was just what the song needed , as he had tried the song in his regular voice and did not like the outcome : " That never bothered me , changing voices to suit a song . You can fool about with it . " " Shining Star " was one of Bowie 's early choices to be a single for the album , but EMI had the final say and did not release the song as a single . A 12 " remix of the song was made available on iTunes when the " Never Let Me Down " EP was released digitally for the first time in 2007 .

Bowie called " New York 's in Love " a sarcastic song about the vanity of big cities .

Bowie originally wrote the song " ' 87 & Cry " as a statement about Margaret Thatcher , who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time . The song referred to the distinction between the authoritarian government and the citizens ( the " dogs " ) , and Bowie admitted that the lyrics verged on the surreal , describing people " eating the energies of others to get to what they wanted . " The track was released as the b @-@ side to the album 's third single , " Never Let Me Down " .

" Too Dizzy " was the first song Bowie and new collaborator Erdal Kizilcay wrote together for the album , and was written in homage to the 50s . Bowie said " a real Fifties subject matter was either love or jealousy , so I thought I ? d stick with jealousy because it ? s a lot more interesting " . Bowie at the time called the song a " throwaway " and seemed surprised that he included it on the album . The song has been deleted from subsequent reissues of Never Let Me Down .

When asked about his choice of including Iggy Pop 's song " Bang Bang " on the album ( instead of perhaps co @-@ writing a new song ) , Bowie stated " Iggy 's done so many good songs that people

never get to hear ... I think it 's one of his best songs , ' Bang Bang , ' and it hasn 't been heard , and now it might be . " " Bang Bang " was released as a promotional CD single in 1987 .

Overall , Bowie summed up the album after it was released in 1987 as an effort to " reestablish what I used to do , which was a guitar @-@ oriented album . I think the next album will be even more so . " His follow @-@ up effort was to be the guitar @-@ oriented rock @-@ band album Tin Machine ( 1989 ) .

= = Critical reception = =

Initial sales of the album were strong but dropped off disappointingly as contemporary reviews of the album were mixed . Critic Ira Robbins wrote " although this casual loud @-@ rock outing ... seems on first blush to be slapdash and slight , the first side is actually quite good , offering provocative pop @-@ culture lyrics delivered with first @-@ take enthusiasm and carefree backing . " In 1987 , Spin magazine called the album " an inspired and brilliantly crafted work . It 's charged with a positive spirit that makes art soul food ; imbued with the contagious energy that gives ideas a leg to dance on " , but in 1989 a different reviewer for the magazine called the album " disappointing " . Rolling Stone magazine called the work an " odd , freewheeling pastiche of elements from all the previous Bowies , " " unfocused , " and possibly " the noisiest , sloppiest Bowie album ever . ... Being noisy and sloppy isn 't necessarily a bad thing , but sad to say , Never Let Me Down is also something of a mess . " Another critic held a general optimism for the potential of the songs on the album , complaining only that the " oppressive production " ruined the songs . Billboard magazine 's 1987 retrospective issue called Never Let Me Down " arguably the year 's most underrated release " and considered the album a " Critic 's Choice " for the year .

Bowie was not concerned with the album 's relative poor performance in the charts , saying " I 've made about 20 albums during my career , and so far this is my third biggest seller . So I can 't be that disappointed , yet , it is a letdown that it hasn 't been as buoyant as it should be . ... But I don 't really feel that negative about it . As far as I 'm concerned it 's one of the better albums I 've made . As I 've said . Never Let Down has been a pretty big seller for me . So I 'm quite happy . " Despite growing criticism in the press , Bowie said that Never Let Me Down was one of the most enjoyable and energetic albums he had made in a long time .

= = Public image = =

Bowie , having just turned 40 the year the album was released , was a common sight on magazine covers during the year . He appeared alongside Tina Turner on the cover of In Fashion magazine ( to the tagline ' Forever cool ' ) , Musician magazine and on the cover of Rolling Stone 's US 20th Anniversary " Style " issue , part of a series of contemporary photographs of Bowie taken by photographer Herb Ritts . Articles about Bowie 's album and tour appeared inside such teen @-@ oriented publications such as Mademoiselle and Teen magazines , the former calling Bowie " a leading candidate for the coolest character in rock . " Bowie was chosen as one of the top male pop stars of the year ( 1987 ) in Billboards end @-@ of @-@ year retrospective issue .

= = Live performances = =

Bowie knew he 'd be taking this album on tour , and in early interviews said " I 'm going to do a stage thing this year , which I 'm incredibly excited about , ' cause I 'm gonna take a chance again " , but when pressed for details , he refused to give up any , saying " I 'll just be doing what I always did , which is keeping things interesting . "

Bowie performed several of the album 's songs during a press tour that preceded his highly theatrical Glass Spider Tour , which played to a combined audience of as many as six million fans . Bowie wanted to produce a live show that picked up where his aborted 1974 Diamond Dogs Tour left off . Although considered financially successful and well attended , the tour itself was critically dismissed . Bowie designed his next few tours specifically to avoid the problems that the Glass

Spider Tour was criticized for by avoiding overly theatrical stage presentations and focusing on his music . Despite the criticism , Bowie maintained that performing on this tour was the most fun he had had on tour up to that point in his career .

= = Album legacy = =

Initially after the album 's release , Bowie was excited to return to the studio to record more material , having written more songs than were recorded for the album . He said he wanted to record more " experimental " music , referring to his work in the 1970s with Brian Eno . However , due to the poor critical reception of the album and subsequent tour , Bowie put those plans on hold and instead formed his rock band Tin Machine , which he used to rejuvenate himself creatively and artistically .

His view on the album soured as the years passed . In 1990 , during interviews for his Sound + Vision Tour , Bowie commented that he felt like he was in a " mire " while making this album , and expressed disappointment at having lost good songs by allowing the album 's production to give the songs too much of a session man feel .

A year later , while working with Tin Machine on their second album , he mused on his previous few albums : " You can tell I was terribly unhappy in the late ' 80s . ... I was in that netherworld of commercial acceptance . It was an awful trip . 1983 , ' 84 , ' 85 , ' 86 , ' 87 - those five years were simply dreadful . ... Never Let Me Down had good songs that I mistreated . I didn 't really apply myself . I wasn 't quite sure what I was supposed to be doing . I wish there had been someone around who could have told me . "

In 1993 , while doing press tours for his album Black Tie White Noise , Bowie acknowledged that , while the album sold more than any of his previous albums ( except Let 's Dance ) , he felt that while making it he had almost lost his interest in making music altogether . He elaborated , " In the end I didn 't lose the songs , but I lost the sound . ... I literally threw them away by giving them to very good people to arrange but not being involved myself , almost to the point of indifference . "

In 1995 , Bowie spoke more at length about how he felt his creativity and music had suffered after the success of Let 's Dance :

[ The great public esteem at that time ] meant absolutely nothing to me . It didn 't make me feel good . I felt dissatisfied with everything I was doing , and eventually it started showing in my work . Let 's Dance was an excellent album in a certain genre , but the next two albums after that [ Tonight and Never Let Me Down ] showed that my lack of interest in my own work was really becoming transparent . My nadir was Never Let Me Down . It was such an awful album . I 've gotten to a place now where I 'm not very judgmental about myself . I put out what I do , whether it 's in visual arts or in music , because I know that everything I do is really heartfelt . Even if it 's a failure artistically , it doesn 't bother me in the same way that Never Let Me Down bothers me . I really shouldn 't have even bothered going into the studio to record it . [ laughs ] In fact , when I play it , I wonder if I did sometimes .

No song from this album has been performed on any of Bowie 's tours after 1987 . However , Bowie had Mario J. McNulty remix the track " Time Will Crawl " in 2008 for his compilation of self @-@ selected favourite songs , iSelect , and later included the same mix on his career @-@ spanning 50th anniversary compilation , Nothing Has Changed .

= = Track listing = =

This was the first album to have different length songs on the vinyl release than on the cassette and CD , with almost all the songs appearing on the latter having a longer running time than on the former .

= = = LP : EMI AMLS 3117 ( UK ) = = =

All songs written and composed by David Bowie ( except where noted ) .

The shortened LP version of the album was released digitally for the first time in 2007 on iTunes (

minus " Too Dizzy " ) .

== CD : EMI CDP 7 46677 2 ( UK ) ==

All songs written and composed by David Bowie ( except where noted ) .

== LP / CD : EMI EYS @-@ 91221 / CP32 @-@ 5398 ( Japan ) ==

The original Japanese release of the album included an exclusive re @-@ recording of the song " Girls " sung in Japanese . On the LP the song was slotted at the end of side one .

== Reissues ==

The track " Too Dizzy " has been deleted from subsequent reissues of the album , reportedly at Bowie 's request because it is his least favourite track on the album .

== 1995 reissue [ Virgin CDVUS 98 ( UK ) ] ==

Virgin Records rereleased the album on CD with three bonus tracks .

== 1999 reissue ( EMI ) ==

EMI released the second reissue in 1999 featuring 24 @-@ bit digitally remastered sound but no bonus tracks , and also without " Too Dizzy " .

== 2007 reissue ==

A 2007 Japanese re @-@ release of the album , based on the EMI 1999 re @-@ issue , included " Too Dizzy " on the track listing although the song itself doesn 't appear on the CD .

== 2009 reissue ==

In 2009 , the album was re @-@ issued in SHM @-@ CD format . The reissue had the same track listing as the 2007 reissue .

== Production credits ==

Producers : David Bowie

David Richards

Musicians : David Bowie ? vocals , guitar , keyboards , tambourine , background vocals

Carlos Alomar ? guitar , guitar synthesizer , tambourine , background vocals

Erdal K?z?lçay ? keyboards , drums , bass , trumpet , background vocals , violins

Peter Frampton ? lead guitar

Philippe Saisse ? piano , keyboards

Carmine Rojas ? bass

Earl Gardner ? flugelhorn

Errol " Crusher " Bennett ? percussion

Stan Harrison ? alto saxophone

Laurie Frink ? trumpet

Steve Elson ? baritone saxophone

Lenny Pickett ? tenor saxophone

Robin Clark , Lani Groves , Diva Gray , Gordon Grodie ? background vocals

Sid McGinnis ? lead guitar on " Bang Bang " , " Time Will Crawl " and " Day @-@ In Day @-@ Out

"

Mickey Rourke ? mid @-@ song rap on " Shining Star ( Makin ' My Love ) "

= = Singles = =

= = Charts = =