

## Brian Eno

**English rock singer, songwriter,  
and keyboard player**

*Eno achieved early fame playing synthesizers with the pioneering British glam rock band, Roxy Music. He went on to define the ambient music genre, and he brought his distinctive sound to the production of hit albums for other artists, such as U2, the Talking Heads, and Devo.*

**Born:** May 15, 1948; Woodbridge, Suffolk, England

**Also known as:** Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno (full name)

**Member of:** Roxy Music; Fripp and Eno; Portsmouth Sinfonia; Cluster; Harmonia 76; 801

### Principal recordings

ALBUMS (solo): *Here Come the Warm Jets*, 1974; *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*, 1974; *Another Green World*, 1975; *Discreet Music*, 1975; *Before and After Science*, 1977; *After the Heat*, 1978 (with Dieter Moebius and Hans-Joachim Roedelius); *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, 1978; *Music for Films*, 1978; *Empty Landscapes*, 1981; *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, 1981 (with David Byrne); *Ambient 4: On Land*, 1982; *Apollo: Atmospheres and Soundtracks*, 1983; *Music for Films, Vol. 2*, 1983 (with Daniel Lanois); *Thursday Afternoon*, 1985; *Music for Films, Vol. 3*, 1988; *Wrong Way Up*, 1990 (with John Cale); *Nerve Net*, 1992; *The Shutov Assembly*, 1992; *Neroli*, 1993; *Robert Sheckley's In a Land of Clear Colours*, 1993 (with Peter Sinfield); *Headcandy*, 1994; *Spinner*, 1995 (with Jah Wobble); *Generative Music 1*, 1996; *The Drop*, 1997; *Extracts from Music for White Cube*, 1997; *Lightness: Music for the Marble Palace*, 1998; *I Dormienti*, 1999; *Kite Stories*, 1999; *Music for Civic Recovery Center*, 2000; *Music for Onmyo-ji*, 2000 (with D. J. Jan Peter Schwalm); *Drawn from Life*, 2001 (with Schwalm); *January 07003: Bell Studies for the Clock of the Long Now*, 2003; *Another Day on Earth*, 2005; *The Pearl*, 2005 (with Harold Budd); *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today*, 2008 (with Byrne).

ALBUMS (with Cluster): *Cluster and Eno*, 1977.

ALBUMS (with Fripp and Eno): *No Pussyfooting*, 1973; *Evening Star*, 1975; *The Equatorial Stars*, 2005; *Beyond Even (1992-2006)*, 2007.

ALBUMS (with Harmonia 76): *Tracks and Traces*, 1997.

ALBUMS (with Portsmouth Sinfonia): *Plays the Popular Classics*, 1974; *Hallelujah*, 1976.

ALBUMS (with Roxy Music): *Roxy Music*, 1972; *For Your Pleasure*, 1973.

### The Life

Born in England in 1948, Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno (EE-noh) grew up near a U.S. Air Force base. The sounds of early rock-and-roll and rhythm-and-blues music, with the tight harmonies and nonsense words of doo-wop, coming from Armed Forces Radio provided early inspiration to Eno. He attended the Winchester School of Art at the University of Southampton, where he encountered the music of contemporary composers, including minimalists such as John Cage, Steve Reich, and La Monte Young. He studied avant-garde subjects such as conceptual painting and sound sculpture. In 1967 Eno married Sarah Grenville, and their daughter, Hannah, was born later that year. Eno graduated from college in 1969.

After finishing school, he moved to London, where he cofounded Roxy Music. At first his role was offstage, mixing the band members' instruments and voices through synthesizers and other electronic devices, occasionally creating loops for live playback on tape recorders. He later joined his bandmates on the stage, where his outrageous make-up and drag costumes helped define the band's aesthetic. After Roxy Music's second album, *For Your Pleasure*, came out in 1973, Eno left the band, citing creative differences with the lead singer, Bryan Ferry, and general boredom with the rock-and-roll lifestyle.

Eno immediately embarked on a number of projects, beginning with a collaboration with King Crimson cofounder Robert Fripp. A series of health problems changed Eno's course, starting with a collapsed lung that forced him to abandon a British tour as front man of a band called the Winkies. A year later, in 1975, Eno was in a car accident, and his injuries left him bedridden. His immobility al-

lowed time for contemplation of the environmental sounds around him, and in this situation Eno's concept of ambient music was born.

In addition to recording ambient music's seminal early albums, Eno was collaborating with musicians such as David Bowie, John Cale, and David Byrne. In 1988, after the demise of his first marriage, Eno married his manager, Anthea Norman-Taylor, with whom he had two daughters, Irial and Darla. Solo albums and collaborations continued, and at the same time Eno found success as an installation artist and a video artist. In 1975 Eno published, in conjunction with artist Peter Schmidt, *Oblique Strategies*, a deck of cards that offers solutions for overcoming creative block. In 1996 Eno founded the Long Now Foundation, which encourages public consideration of the long-term future of society and culture.

### The Music

As a teenager, Eno made his first recording: the sound of a pen tapping a tin lampshade. He slowed it down and played it back, and in this way the foundation for his experimental, electronic, and ambient music was laid. For Eno, the tape recorder became an instrument. He was inspired by twentieth century minimalist composers' reliance on chance, and he used tape-delay feedback systems, synthesizers, and computer-generated compositions. Though his earliest solo albums were oriented toward the pop sound, in the 1970's Eno created and coined ambient music, that is, music played at a low volume, that alters the experience of the surrounding environment. Eno brought his distinctive, eclectic, and sought-after sound to the production of hit albums by Paul Simon, U2, and Coldplay.

**Roxy Music.** Roxy Music's eponymous first album was released in 1972. The band's music was an amalgamation of postmodernist, art-school, and glam rock. The album contained a variety of cultural references, including to Humphrey Bogart, to the Beatles, and to Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* (1870). It was recorded in one week's time, before the band signed a contract with Island Records. Eno sang back-up vocals, and he played the synthesizer, creating weird, atonal noise using tape recorders. With this debut album Roxy Music joined the ranks of the significantly influential

avant-garde bands of the era, such as the Velvet Underground and Captain Beefheart, paving the way for subsequent groups that relied on electronics to define their sound, such as the Cars and Devo. When Eno departed Roxy Music after its second album, the remaining band members pursued a raucous, less-cutting-edge sound, becoming known for the polished music of their hit 1982 album, *Avalon*.

**Another Green World.** Eno released this solo album in 1975, following two other successful solo albums: *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)* and *Here Come the Warm Jets*. *Another Green World* was a bridge between the experimental pop that came before it and the ambient music that followed. Nine of the fourteen songs were instrumental, and those that were not contained strange, unconventional lyrics. Though many found the album less accessible than Eno's prior work, critics and fans praised it. Fripp played guitar, and Eno mixed and distorted that sound with keyboards and complex rhythms.



Brian Eno. (Tobias Schwarz/Reuters/Landov)