

on the synthesizer, no matter how fabulous a sound I got ... If I had a stock of fabulous sounds I would just always use them, I wouldn't bother to find new ones."<sup>39</sup>

Thus specifications for many of the total circuits Eno has used to produce his dazzling array of timbres are apparently lost forever, the exact process is gone, but the product remains. Often his complex chains of sound-producing and -altering equipment include multiple instruments and electronic devices that interact in unpredictable ways. He describes one such situation that arose when he was working in a studio in Canada with producer Daniel Lanois. The studio happened to contain a Fender Rhodes electric piano and a rattly old amplifier/speaker. Eno put the speaker on the piano's sustain pedal so that all the notes were free to ring, fitted a long plastic tube onto a microphone which was plugged into the speaker, then experimented by playing various notes at the keyboard:

One note – just one note – made the whole system come to life. It made the speaker shake with a beautiful purring sound, like a huge foghorn. The piano was ringing away, and the pick-up through the tube particularly resonated around that frequency and all the harmonics.<sup>40</sup>

## Systems of Composing

Although when he gets to the studio he may work in an empirical way, without much conscious idea of what is going to happen next, general ideas for projects take shape in Eno's imagination over fairly long periods of time, and it seems he is constantly toying with a multitude of ideas about creative situations, many of which never come to fruition. In a sense, the first steps in the compositional process involve the decision to work on a piece in a general way, the decision whether or not to use other musicians to generate raw material, and a some concept of the form of the final product – through the 1970s and early 1980s, normally a record album.

Eno has a reputation for being extremely busy all the time, even when not in the studio, he is likely to be experimenting with instruments and tape recorders at home, tapping and banging on found objects to see what they sound like, or recording environmental noises on a portable cassette recorder. The vast majority of the music he has made has never been released on record, in 1983 he estimated that he had about seven hundred pieces stored away on tape, some of which he'd made alone, some of which were leftovers from studio sessions with other musicians. "People would probably be surprised to know my own rejection rate of my work. I must produce a hundred times the amount of music I release."<sup>41</sup> Evidently putting sounds on tape is far from enough, judgement has to intervene at some stage of the game. One reason Eno saves so many of his sketches, however, is that he is aware that his judgement may change at some point in the future, or that his ear will pick up something on an old tape of which he had not been aware at the time: "Later on you may suddenly realize that there was a secret concern that you weren't consciously dealing with, but which actually dominates the piece, and that concern might be the most interesting one." On the other hand, "Sometimes I

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<sup>39</sup> Bangs, "Eno," 42.

<sup>40</sup> Grant, "Eno Against Interpretation," 29.

<sup>41</sup> Aikin, "Brian Eno," 58.