

of rock, while Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and Chick Corea approached it from the direction of jazz. A few remarkable musicians such as Frank Zappa and Robert Fripp have made repeated forays beyond the bounds of rock styles, but tend to return to rock as if it were a relatively stable home base.

Eno, on the other hand, is among the few prominent musicians from a rock background who has taken rock to its stylistic limits, gone beyond them, and stayed beyond. His last major solo effort in a rock-related style was in 1981, when he made the strange, unique album *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* with David Byrne – an album that owes at least as much to Eno’s assimilation of world-music influences as it does to rock proper. Up to that point, Eno had worked with essentially two musical types, progressive rock and the ambient style, moving back and forth between them for individual projects, or, in a number of highly interesting experiments, combining elements of the two, since 1981, his solo music has been strictly ambient. In this chapter and the following ones we shall examine Eno’s progressive rock and ambient music in turn, concentrating on those albums in which Eno is listed as the primary composer or co-composer.¹

The Albums

For his first solo album, *Here Come the Warm Jets* of 1973, Eno brought some sixteen musicians into the studio (several of whom he had worked with previously) and assembled a set of ten songs that in some respects were derivative, in some respects experimental, and in other ways strikingly anticipated developments in the punk and new wave rock of the late 1970s. The album’s title turned to be a poetic reference to urination. The credits, which, as on all of Eno’s progressive rock records, meticulously list who played what on which tracks,² note that “Eno sings ... and (occasionally) plays simplistic keyboards, snake guitar, electric larynx and synthesizer, and treats the other instruments.” “Snake guitar” and “electric larynx” are the first of many such whimsical terms that Eno coined to describe given sounds either by their timbral character or their means of production. Although the songs are composed by Eno, Eno/Manzanera, Eno/Fripp, and Eno (arr. Thompson/Jones/Judd/Eno), Eno was the controlling force behind the album’s creation, as well as its producer. In the music of *Here Come the Warm Jets*, references, probably both intentional and unintentional, to the history of rock abound: in Eno’s vocal style, which in some songs is directly modelled on the idiosyncracies of Roxy Music’s Bryan Ferry, in the standard formal outlines and harmonic structure of many of the songs, and in specific sound-types such as the neo-fifties tinkling piano and falsetto “ahs” of “Cindy Tells Me” or the characteristic drum rhythms of “Blank Frank” (modelled on Bo Diddley’s classic “Who Do You Love” which had been covered by several groups). Eno’s own musical personality emerges, however, in the highly varied uses of texture and instrumentation, in the formal experimentation (for instance, in “On Some Faraway Beach,” in which the vocal melody enters, tacked on almost as an afterthought, only after several minutes of an instrumental set of variations), and in the special attention paid to timbre (as in the

¹ This selection criterion means that little or no mention will be made in these pages of the roughly three dozen other albums Eno has produced or played on. His contribution to most of these other albums is briefly noted in the “Eno Discography” in “Musical Sources” below, 337.

² For full listings of the musicians on this and other albums, see “Eno Discography,” 337.