

- Refrain
- Verse 3 (Wimshurst guitar warms up in background)
- Wimshurst guitar solo (over Refrain chords)
- Refrain
- Fade-out over tonic chord

Straightforward as it is harmonically, rhythmically, melodically, and formally, Eno was correct in pointing out that songs like this cannot be reductively analyzed in such terms alone: “You can’t notate the *sound* of “St. Elmo’s Fire.”⁵ (Emphasis mine.)

Perhaps Eno’s most soothing song of the pop variety is “Here He Comes” (*Science*). An endless stream of tonics, dominants, and subdominants wash across the listener while muted drums, basses, guitars, and synthesizers contribute their pastel tone colors to the mix. Once again, the ambiguity of the lyrics, about “the boy who tried to vanish to the future or past,” who “is no longer here with us with his sad blue eyes,” takes this song out of the realm of unreflected pop, but this type of song does have clear precedents, such as the Beatles’ “Nowhere Man,” written a decade earlier: “Nowhere Man” and “Here He Comes” have the same tempo and harmonic similarities, and share the idea of a wistful masculine anti-hero. While the Lennon tune is based on a descending melodic sequence, however, Eno’s is a prolongation or embellishment of essentially one note. Whether, at five and a half minutes, “Here He Comes” must be judged too long depends on the receptivity of the listener and the mode of listening. In the linear, horizontal mode, little or nothing seems to “happen” for the piece’s duration, but listened to vertically, the song reveals a perpetual play of timbral and motivic elements: strip away the drums, voice, and steady pulse, and we are not far from the ambient style.

Strange Songs

It was probably Eno’s proclivity for creating specialized “strange” songs that more than anything else led to the congealing of his public image as the “cadaver we’ve all come to love and recognize ... the scaramouche of the synthesizer.”⁶ Lester Bangs could describe him as “the real bizarro warp factor for 1974,” in an age of rock star transvestitism, glam and glitter.⁷ There was more to Eno’s penchant for transgressing the bounds of taste and custom than dressing and grooming himself like a woman in order to express his feminine side: his strange pieces are arguably the most original of all his songs, since in them he felt most free to experiment with the elements of musical style.

Eno did not exactly create the strange genre. Precursors of a sort can be found in that perennial presence on the pop charts, the novelty song, of which may be cited examples as diverse as Bobby “Boris” Pickett and the Crypt-Kickers’ “Monster Mash” (1962), Arthur Brown’s inimitable “Fire” (1968) and Bob Dylan’s “Rainy Day Women #12 & 35” (1966), with its punning “Everybody must get stoned” refrain. There is even a specific “demented” tradition in rock – catalogued, popularized, and celebrated by Dr. Demento for his syndicated radio

⁵ Glenn O’Brien, “Eno at the Edge of Rock,” *Andy Warhol’s Interview* 8 (June 1978), 31.

⁶ Dagnal, “Eno and the Jets: Controlled Chaos,” 16.

⁷ Bangs, “Records: *Here Come the Warm Jets*,” 62.