

CHAPTER ELEVEN: COLLABORATIONS

Beginning with his work with Roxy Music, Eno has enjoyed working with a host of rock luminaries. Roxy Music's tatement was as much visual and conceptual as it was musical, Bryan Ferry tantalizing his audience with his air of jaded elegance and with the endless procession of surreal, anguishing anima/lover figures in his lyrics. On the two albums Eno recorded with Roxy Music, it is difficult to pinpoint Eno's musical contribution, except for a few inspired synthesizer solos of the "funny sounds" variety. Although Eno's solo albums show a decisive turn away from rock after *Before and After Science* of 1977, he has continued to collaborate with other musicians in the making of rock albums, and has been much in demand as a producer and session musician. Robert Fripp has called Eno a "catalytic creature" whose thoughtful, interested presence at a recording session was bound to increase the endeavor's chances of artistic success.¹ Of the many records that Eno had a hand in making, those with Fripp, David Bowie, and David Byrne and Talking Heads deserve special mention for the unusual nature of their contents and for their influence on the direction of rock.

With Robert Fripp

No Pussyfooting, the first of the two major Eno/Fripp collaborations, grew out of Eno's early experiments with tape recorders, out of Fripp's ability to supply the appropriate kind of musical input from an electric guitar, and out of the musical chemistry between the two musicians. By the time Eno invited Fripp to come over and play in his London home studio in September, 1972,² Eno had worked out a system of producing music by means of using two tape recorders set up so that when a single sound was played, it was heard several seconds later at a slightly lower volume level, then again several seconds later at a still lower volume level, and so on. The length of time between an event and its repetition depended on the speed of the tape and the distance between the two tape recorders. Example 13, which is based on the diagram Eno made for the back cover of *Discreet Music*, shows the physical set-up in simplified form. Only two reels are used, the feeding reel of tape recorder 1 and the take-up reel of tape recorder 2, with the ribbon of tape stretching between the two recorders.

¹ Interview broadcast from KFOG San Francisco, 12 Nov. 1986.

² September 9 is given as the date of recording of Side One on the album cover. Elsewhere, Fripp has said that the recording session took place in July of the same year: see inner liner notes to Robert Fripp, *God Save the Queen*, Polydor MPF 1298, 1980.