

revolves around two chords, F# major and G# major, implying a tonic of C#. Finally, “Neukvln” is something like a German expressionist version of the ambient style: dissonant diminished chords evoking a movie-organ atmosphere, saxophone melodies evoking gangster life, and somewhat harsh and un-liquid water-like sounds. Again, Eno alone would not, or perhaps could not, have come up with a chord progression like this.

Lodger of 1979, the final Bowie/Eno collaboration, represents Bowie drawing back to more familiar musical territory, and from a musical point of view the album is considerably less interesting than the first two. The overall effect of *Lodger* is rock until you drop, without so much as a soft ballad to break up the pace. Long stretches sound unedited, as if Bowie did not know when to stop, what to subtract. Of the ten songs, Eno co-authored six, and is listed as providing “ambient drone,” “prepared piano and cricket menace,” synthesizers and guitar treatments, “horse trumpets, Eroica horn,” and piano. *Lodger* is overproduced: in the continuous assault of the rock frenetics, Eno’s treatments get buried in the busy mix. As he later said, a whole world can be extracted out of a single sound, but such effects are easily lost if the input and surroundings are too complicated. Eno and Bowie “argued quite a lot about what was going to happen” on particular tracks, and Eno felt that the resolutions were compromises in many cases: “It started off extremely promising and quite revolutionary and it didn’t seem to quite end that way.”¹⁵

With Talking Heads and David Byrne

In 1978, the year following his first collaboration with Bowie, the peripatetic Eno moved to a loft in Soho, Manhattan, and immersed himself in the downtown music-art-performance scene. Though his own commitment to rock was weakening, he found some of the new New York punk/new wave groups exciting enough to produce: he helped catapult Devo to popularity with their album *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*, and contributed to the growing genre of punk anthology records by producing *No New York*, featuring music by the Contortions, Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, Mars, and DNA. He worked with his old colleague Robert Fripp, also temporarily stationed in New York, on Fripp’s first solo album, the experimental, collage-like *Exposure*.

Of greatest consequence, however, was Eno’s work with art-rock band Talking Heads, for whom he produced three albums between 1978 and 1980, and with the head Head, David Byrne, with whom he made *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, released in 1981. Talking Heads were a band with the right idea in the right place at the right time. The concept was to use a primitivist rock attack with a heavy African accent as a vehicle for a statement about rock and its relationship to the media and other social institutions. The context was the burgeoning performance art and mixed-media scene of downtown New York in the late 1970s, a scene that John Rockwell has described as “a cohesive artistic community” – a community that had sustained the experimental efforts of musicians like Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Glenn Branca, as well as artists simultaneously involved in a number of fields, such as Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, and Robert Wilson.¹⁶ The scene fostered an exuberant disregard for tradi-

¹⁵ Amirkhanian, “Eno at KPFA,” 27-8.

¹⁶ John Rockwell, *All American Music: Composition in the Late 20th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 244.