

## Epilog – 1989-1995

Around 1989, when this book had not quite yet been published – it was still in dissertation form, with more technical lingo, methodological baggage, and notated musical examples than the book as it exists now – I met Brian Eno backstage at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. One of his new audio-visual installations was humming away in a building behind the nearby Exploratorium.

He was there to be interviewed in front of an enthusiastic, appreciative packed house by Bay Area composer and new music champion Charles Amirkhanian, who had kindly arranged the meeting between us.

Before the interview show, Eno came into the dressing room and we were introduced by his manager. Amazingly enough, he was just like all the descriptions I'd read: slightly built, with an ingenuous smile, oddly forthright and self-effacing at the same time. He displayed an easy sense of humor, opinionated yet self-deprecating.

Eno had with him a bound copy of my dissertation, which Charles had given him earlier that week, and he had already read portions of it. The problem was, in the taxi on the way over to the Palace of Fine Arts, he had unwittingly sat on a juicy wad of chewing gum, which was now ungraciously affixed to his posterior regions. Consequently, much of our keenly anticipated encounter took place with the great Brian Eno bent over a dressing table while an assistant nimbly applied a razor blade to a delicate area on the seat of his stylish black pants.

With the dissertation open before him on the table, Eno flipped through the pages, reading out loud and commenting on various passages. He said he was sincerely impressed with the effort that had gone into the book, while simultaneously making amusing remarks to the effect that he couldn't believe anyone would actually write an academic thesis about his music. He liked it, though, joking that I'd somehow found all the best things he'd ever said and assembled them together in one place.

As the sure-fingered assistant continued to perform his deft surgical removal of the offending blob, Eno lighted on a passage where I'd described one of his ambient compositions as being in the Dorian mode. He chuckled and said, "I didn't know that piece was in Dorian mode."

This – and it was confirmed in subsequent communications between us – turned out to be the aspect of the book that most fascinated Eno. For as a musician, Eno was self-educated but largely untrained: well-versed in a variety of philosophical issues surrounding music, its history, and its production, he nevertheless had less knowledge of traditional music theory, harmony, counterpoint, and form than the average American college music student. So to read my learned analyses of his works was an eye-opener.

In his heavily analytical 1973 book *Twilight of the Gods: The Music of the Beatles*, musicologist Wilfrid Mellers mused that "Some people seem to find it inherently risible that pop music should be discussed in technical terms at all; when the senior critic of *The Times* wrote the first musically literate piece about the Beatles it was greeted with hoots of mirth both from the Beatles themselves and from their hostile critics."