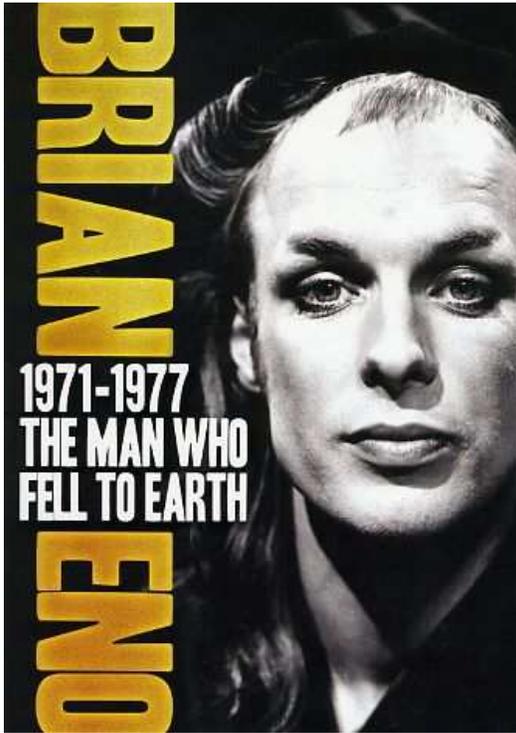


FAME Review: Brian Eno - 1971 - 1977: The Man Who Fell to Earth (DVD)



1971 - 1977: The Man Who Fell to Earth

[Brian Eno](#)

Sexy Intellectual - SIVDV564 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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It is my contention that two of the most important musical figures of the 20th century, regardless of genre, are Robert Fripp and this gent, Brian Eno, the two often, past and present, collaborating on precedent-setting recordings, the astonishing *No Pussyfooting* just one. It is so far past time that someone should have documentarily chronicled the latter of these two geniuses that it makes my teeth hurt just thinking about it. Wouldn't matters figure, then, that the maverick Sexy Intellectual imprint would be the outfit stepping up to the plate? The subject can be a bit daunting, sure, and past efforts such as Eric Tamm's (interviewed here) biography/analysis have been well-intended while largely idolatrous, but he and others can be quickly forgiven, as Monsieur Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno and his work have little, if anything, negative attached. Thus, the generous 2½ hours devoted to the guy who conquered Tiger Mountain through oblique strategies hits just the right spot.

As writer Johnny Rogan points out, even within the far-out glam-king rock outfit Roxy Music, Eno was further out still, almost an alien. Everyone in the gaggle being art school gents, Bryan Ferry & Co. included the androgynously subtle but imposing Eno in their original line-up, a pairing destined to schism, as the frontman and the VCS3 knobs twiddler / recording wizard possessed their own unique visions within strong core personalities. Ah, but there are totally unexpected surprises as well: a goodly percentage of those enamored of the obscure but fondly regarded David O'List (Nice, Jethro Tull, Jet, etc.) are unaware that he was a member of Roxy for nearly a year, and he's here captured reminiscing about those days. Then there's the matter of Eno's 'non-musician' epithet, both self-effacing and ironic, perfectly happy to admit falling short of classic standards while slyly referencing the fact that an inventionist and manipulator could compete on equal ground with top-notch musos.

The film also takes a turn into Eno's notoriety as a libertine, a gent who lived the rock and roll lifestyle to the hilt, with more than a small taste for the ladies. I caught Robert Fripp at the Roxy long ago during a Frippertronics tour, and even there the conversation derailed into, as Robert put it, Brian and he "sharing a lady or two". As Mark Prendergast explains, it's interesting to note the divergence: Ferry presents himself as a striking lounge lizard, perhaps even a lothario, on stage while Eno remains flamboyant but highly controlled; in private, they exchange roles: Brian the outgoing hedonist, Bryan the shy private guy. The comment is made that while Ferry, when he chose to consort, would be seen with a fashion model, Eno would sleep with anyone. For those long curious about the verity lying beneath so many years of media hype, this brings a wry smile.

A power struggle erupted twixt Ferry and Eno (and hey, progheads, have ya noted how much Ferry embodied The Executive Hackett Look long before Steve?; glom the *Do the Strand* video [here](#) if not) and Eno was on the outs. It's interesting to note how Robert Christgau, commenting on the split, is ever more the reactionary in his dotage, a trend he's been developing strongly over quite some time, later in the film even making some remarkably stupid criticisms of Fripp as well as of Eno—later, in analysis of his solo album. Nonetheless, the Roxy rift signaled Brian's entry into ever more avant-garde pastures with figures like Robert Wyatt, Cornelius Cardew, Gavin Bryars, and etc. In fact, after announcing his departure from the group, he was well noted for dancing down King's Road, jubilant in a release from pressures against his grain. Therein, John Cage's seminal influence began to pronounce itself more than ever, along with cybernetic theory, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and others. Enter Fripp.

With *No Pussyfooting* and its elongated, serial, overlapping structures of layered guitar and keyboards, Fripp & Eno punched a hole in the complacency of both rock and progrock, selling at first only lukewarmly yet, like so many far-flung masterpieces, eventually becoming universally hailed as a milestone. Thus also began Eno's reputation for getting, as Tamm puts it, "maximum originality and creativity from the people he's working with" due to an easygoing garrulous nature. Interestingly, Eno also put out his first solo LP, *Here Come the Warm Jets*, around the same time, returning to rock and pop roots with striking differences, in many ways continuing the work from Roxy, echoing Ferry's musical wont.

Ah, but I'm importuning you, dear reader, with my prolixity, and so will close by saying that, as ever, the narration in this documentary is exquisite, the editing smooth and flawless, the visuals well balanced, the film standing as a textbook in how to create such work. I've presented only the first hour and there's still the *Another Green World* story (with extraordinary bassist Percy Jones relating his own experiences), the Obscure label tale, the origination of ambient music, and everything else. Thus, once again, we

are treated to filmic history and historiography well represented in a new epoch. In finality, then, I have but one inquiry: Okay, Sexy Intellectual, now where's the film on Fripp? I await with seraphic smile and beatific anticipation.

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