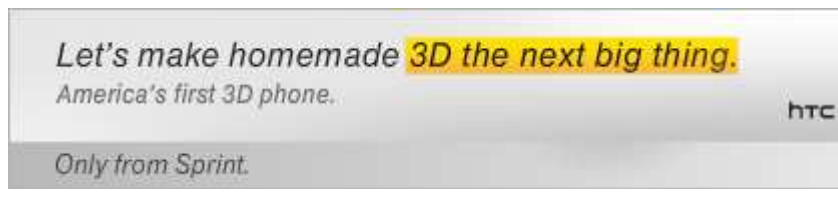


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Brian Eno - 1971-1977: The Man Who Fell to Earth

Dir. Ed Haynes [editor]

[Sexy Intellectual; 2011]
by **DEREK SMITH**



STYLES: music documentary

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Going in with the knowledge that this documentary, the first to specifically tackle any of Brian Eno's long, illustrious, and complex career, is unauthorized, one must be ready to forgive the almost total absence of interviews with Eno and his two most famous collaborators, David Bowie and Byrne. It is a legitimate complaint and an undoubted limitation of the film's scope, but ironically, what is lost in those potentially revealing conversations is gained through the subsequent necessity that the filmmaker focus more on the less well-known but equally prolific and influential works as aspects of the soundscaper's career. In short, it's more for the hardcore music geek than the casual Eno fan.

Combining an abundance of archival footage and interviews with rock critics and historians, ambient musicians and Eno's collaborators (most interestingly Hans-Joachim Roedelius of Harmonia and Cluster, perhaps the most criminally underrated of Krautrock bands), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* offers an exhaustive, and, at two and a half hours, occasionally exhausting, cataloging everything Eno touched in those seven remarkably productive years. From his early work with Roxy Music to his solo pop and ambient albums to his work with Bowie and Talking Heads, Eno offers a fascinating musical arc, whose growth and development is inherently interesting, as his transition within the 70s alone covers more ground than most artists can even dream of covering in a lifetime.

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...develops the happenings of the... Behind the music style music doc and instead focuses on the music itself, lending insight into all of Eno's various experim... NEWS MUSIC REVIEWS FEATURES FILM CHOCOLATE GRINDER
 techniques and a keen critical eye that examines his own limitations as a self-proclaimed "non-musician." Even his influence in Roxy Music is never overstated, as critics and Eno himself make it clear that it was Bryan Ferry's band and that Eno provided the more experimental edge from behind the scenes. Not to suggest that there isn't a fair share of fawning by Eno acolytes but for the most part, the interviews are relatively objective, interested more in unearthing the untold details of Eno's working methods and collaborations than trying to convince viewers to go out and buy his albums.

The film's successful balance of focusing on Eno as musician and songwriter and Eno as innovator, collaborator, and soundshaper helps to reveal a man whose role seemingly changed with each subsequent album, his experimental and collaborative nature allowing for an organic progression through nearly every prominent rock and pop style of the decade. While Eno himself may not have wanted the documentary to be made, it does the man justice, and its timeliness — following the end of the aughts, where his genre experimental and layered production style carried a greater influence than any decade since the 70s — can't be overstated. It may lack the star power to draw in viewers who know Eno only from his work with David Bowie, but its breadth should hold their attention as equally well as the ambient aficionados. And if it helps to sell a few more copies of *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)* or *Here Come the Warm Jets* in the process... well, that's just icing on the cake.

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"Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed." - fortit

