

Duke Ellington

★★★★

Reminiscing In Tempo

The life and music of a jazz aristocrat astonishingly reexamined



Duke Ellington famously never celebrated his own birthday. So when he died, in 1974,

his only sibling, Ruth, 16 years his junior, decided to hold an annual birthday bash for him in his absence. She celebrated her elder brother's birthday annually for almost 30 years after his death (until her own passing in 2004) with extravagant soirees featuring the great and good from the jazz world. Film-maker Gary Keys, who'd previously profiled Ellington in his acclaimed 1980 documentary, *Memories of Duke*, was invited to an Ellington birthday celebration in 1997. Capturing it on film, he used informal interviews with some of the party-goers – including vocalist Al Hibbler and several eminent US jazz musicians and critics – as the basis of this lovingly wrought portrait. The inclusion of rare footage of Ellington's band performing in Mexico during 1968 is a welcome bonus to an absorbing documentary.

Charles Waring



Brian Eno

★★★★

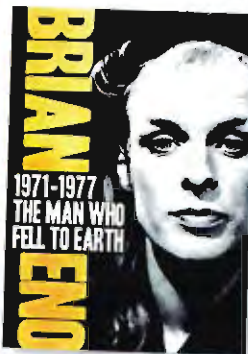
1971-1977: The Man Who Fell To Earth

An in-depth examination of the creative catalyst's Golden Age

Six years covered here saw an extraordinary upwelling of creative activity from the self-styled non-musician, whose roots were in cybernetics, the chance methods used by composers like John Cage, rock'n'roll and doo-wop. The number of landmark releases Eno was involved with in this period is extraordinary: Roxy Music's *Low* and *Heroes*; his four audacious vocal solo albums; and massively significant ambient works such as *Music For Airports*. Despite all the theories, Eno produced approachable music that belied a romantic love of melody and often carried a sense of melancholy. The journalists and musicians interviewed – including collaborators Percy Jones and Brian Turrington, and Eno biographer David Sheppard – convey the excitement of the period, even though some of the music deliberately lacked that quality. Meanwhile, guitarist Lloyd Watson had the misfortune to share a room with Eno when his group supported Roxy Music and recalls sleepless nights due to his roommate's libidinous antics with fans.

Mike Barnes

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Roger Waters

★★★★

The Wall – Live In Berlin

Featuring *Sounds Of Conflict*, *Useful Idiots*, *Marsanne*, *Faithful* and more



In terms of scale and reach, the global jukebox that was Live Aid had something of a

parallel in Waters' Berlin, 1990 performance of *The Wall*. Rendered for a local audience of some 250,000, and beamed live to TV viewers in 50 countries, its grand themes took on a new resonance when staged just months after the real wall came down. All manner of unlikely collaborations make the show's opportune merger of milestones – cultural and political – even more potent. Where else could you find Van Morrison singing Comfortably Numb with The Band's Levon Helm and Rick Danko? Or Joni Mitchell and flautist James Galway thrillingly paired on Waters' sublime anti-war ballad, Goodbye Blue Sky? Extras include a documentary that reveals the gig's Potsdamer Platz location had to be swept for mines. This new deluxe version of the Berlin event arrives to coincide with Waters' May 2011 production of *The Wall* at the O2.

James McNair

Michael Simmons

Stan Kenton

★★★★

Artistry In Rhythm

Comprehensive documentary of an unjustly neglected jazz innovator



"That lasted so long, I've got to do something new now... Kenton was very severe," says bongos

player Jack Costanzo, explaining the motivation of the late bandleader, whose popularity spanned some 40 years and took many musical turns along the way. This illuminating and entertaining documentary makes a convincing case for the late Kenton as one of the unsung pioneers, crediting him with, among other things, taking jazz out of the ballroom and into the concert hall and (simultaneously with Dizzy Gillespie) integrating Afro-Cuban rhythms into big-band jazz. Kenton, who gave early exposure to such greats as Gerry Mulligan, Maynard Ferguson and Lee Konitz, was also an early convert to the more serious progressive jazz in the late '40s. Although quality vintage footage is in relatively short supply here, the two-hour programme makes up for that dearth with copious use of still photos and interviews with those who were there.

Jeff Tamarkin

Brian teaser: Eno in the '70s.

