



The Calm Before the Storm: 1969 - 1971

[David Bowie](#)

Sexy Intellectual - SIDVD572 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
(progdawg@hotmail.com).

Sexy Intellectual decided to not take the easy way out and commence their David Bowie saga with the obvious choice, **Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars**, but instead pound the pavement from the very beginning and chronicle his first three releases, among which is a monster: **The Man Who Sold the World**, an LP that floored many in the 70s but continues to be curiously ignored for the seminally...er...whatever it was and is. Cabaret metal, actually, but then it's always been a bit difficult, before The Thin White Duke hit his *Fame* stage and went whole-hog commercial, to categorize his early output.

For this DVD, SI eschewed its usual roster of Christgau and the more obvious choices, going instead for a gaggle of eccentrics, and that was a damn good decision perfectly fitting the tone of the subject. Andrew Mueller's particularly amusing and devastating, a critic from the soles of his shoes up. Add John Peel's amiable self in the mix, and the interest factor uplevels. One interesting element that stands out in the documentary is the fact that ace producer Tony Visconti, the man most responsible for Bowie's rise, hated *Space Oddity*, the song that assured David's fame, just hated it. Thought it was a cheap novelty trick. Couldn't get out of the room swiftly enough when it played. And, my, how even the greats can fail to see the future! Considering the fey nature of that debut LP, it's a bit hard to fathom that Visconti, whose talents are hefty, would miss its stand-out track, but that's the sort of scoop DVDs like this excel in.

But by the advent of **Man Who Sold the World**, David had his feet well under him in that diabolically dark release, coinciding with an uptick in the singer's notorious mental discomfitures. For those around at the time, the disc was a shock but presaged what was to come in a composer who never stood still for very long. **Man** led to **Hunky Dory**, what many see as a more refined effort but certainly one possessing no end of charms and strong songs. These latter two slabs, though, when taken together, perfectly predicted the impending deluge in the LP that would establish Bowie for all time, the **Ziggy** goliath, which is where this documentary leaves off, making the viewer hungry for what one hopes will be a continuing effort in this direction.

The Calm Before the Storm is unusually short for an SI offering, running to only 65 minutes when the lion's share of its catalogue hits 90 minutes to two hours or more. Nonetheless, it's jam-packed with insights, anecdotalia, sidelights, and no end of opinionation and pop sagacity. Should you be interested in the era, in proto-glam, and in this period of the acclaimed performer's history, and you should be, it won't fail to provoke interest.

Edited by: David N. Pyles
(dnpyles@acousticmusic.com)

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Website design by David N. Pyles
DNPyles@acousticmusic.com
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