



David Bowie Under Review 1976-1979: The Berlin Trilogy

reviewed by *Si Wooldridge*

DVD features live and studio performances by [David Bowie](#) along with rare interviews, reviewed by esteemed experts such as Dieter Moebius, Michael Rother (former members of both Neu! and Cluster, key Bowie influences), Mark Prendergast, David Stubbs, Daryl Easlea (journalists, authors), and Paolo Hewitt among others.

Introduction

David Bowie is a musical icon and genius, sustaining an evolving career in [music](#) for nearly 40 years. We're not talking about the treading water kind of career that the likes of [The Rolling Stones](#), Eric Clapton and Status Quo have had either, we're talking about a musician who isn't afraid to experiment and put out music that others would deem to a failure.

The 70's were undeniably his peak in terms of success, a series of [albums](#) that influenced a generation and made him arguably one of the biggest stars in the world. His performance of Starman on Top Of The Pops, for example, is lauded as one of the landmarks in [music television](#).

Still, Bowie's personal life was in turmoil through both drug addiction and [media](#) attention and by the mid-70's he decided to get away from it all. Decamping to Berlin, he hooked up with [Brian Eno](#) and along with producer Tony Visconti embarked on the 'Berlin Trilogy', three albums hugely influenced by Krautrock bands such as Kraftwerk, Can, Neu and Harmonia.

The resulting albums were Low, "Heroes" and The Lodger. Not exactly universally acclaimed at the time, these albums (particularly the first two) are seen as landmark musical moments and also led to the New Romantic movement of the early 80's.

This [documentary](#) examines the period and music of the Berlin period of Bowie's career.

Video/Visuals

This is an improvement over some the [DVDs](#) in this category as we get to see snippet of proper Bowie vids (China Girl) as well as the dodgy live performance footage. Also includes bits from groups like [Talking Heads](#) and Blur where comparisons are made. Mainly though it's talking heads time...

Audio/Soundtrack

Stereo sound mix that's fine, but again no subtitles.

Extra Features

Bowie after Berlin – short interview segment that's no different to the main feature except it covers, rather dismissively in some cases, what happened after Berlin.

Interactive quiz – 25 questions on Bowie's Berlin period, of which I only got 6 right. Ah well...

Bios – text biographies on the interviewees for the [documentary](#).

Overall Opinion

David Bowie is one of those artists where you may not be a die-hard fan but you can appreciate the impact he had on [music](#) in general. Bowie is an innovator and still is, at a time where his contemporaries seem happy to be churning out the same old same old or just touring the old music to fans happy enough to lap it up. I for one am thankful to Bowie for inspiring a lot of people to get dressed up in frilly shirts, wear makeup and play synthesisers. Possibly not quite what he had in mind when making Low or "Heroes", but hey...

As a fan of kinds, I only have a few of his albums and they are only the brilliant Best Of, Station to Station, Low, "Heroes" and Scary Monsters. They'll do for me as I get all the singles I like plus the music that influenced the music I grew up with. Whilst the Krautrock bands made the music that inspired Bowie in this period, the New Romantic movement may possibly never have gotten off the ground without

Low in particular (it was played in the Blitz club ran by Steve Strange and Rusty Egan quite a lot until 'proper' New Romantic records started coming out).

This documentary is actually pretty good, gathering together some interesting interviewees and putting flesh on a period of Bowie's career that I've been interested in but didn't really know too much about. I'm not entirely sure on Paolo Hewitt though. I mean, he's clearly a fan but he looks too much of a poser and has a propensity to swear a lot. Still, it's more than made up by the presence of both Dieter Moebius and Michael Rother.

Interesting...