

he never seems to stray far from a sense of the inherent mystery of the world, and that sense of mystery excites and motivates him. Eno's favorite adjective is "interested." The word denotes to him more than a merely intellectual flirtation with a passing idea, when he is interested in something, it has awakened that sense of wonder, and he is palpably "engaged" in it, in the sense of full, existential, personal engagement.

Composers today have available to them the entire world of music: it is no further away than the local library or record store. One consequence of this state of affairs is that to an ever-increasing degree, the whole matter of "influences" is becoming less and less clear-cut. Things were simpler in earlier periods, and the historian's task in dealing with earlier music is rather different. It is one thing to note that Bach copied out Vivaldi scores by hand, or to trace the history of the parody Mass in the sixteenth century: in those instances, the musical tradition in question was insular to a greater or lesser extent, the music available to the composers was limited in quantity, style, and genre, and the biographical facts available to the researcher are at a minimum, when "influences" can be positively proclaimed, it usually represents a triumph of intrepid musicological sleuthing as well as a confirmation of the traditional, linear interpretation of music history.

It is quite another thing to take note of the music that Eno has counted among his influences: in his case, the point to be made is that he exemplifies a new type of composer whose musical background is astonishingly diverse: he has exposed himself to a variety of traditions ranging from rock to classical, from avant-garde to experimental, as well as to a variety of non-Western musics such as Arabic, African, and Bulgarian. Today, the "chain of influence" is more likely to be a complex network or web, with many points of intersection that can become difficult or impossible to sort out. When the vast array of "influences" is processed and re-processed in the mental melting pot of a modern composer like Eno, the resulting works sometimes show definite ties with this or that tradition, but just as frequently, the individual piece will manifest no certain origins, the input of the "influences" having been so completely assimilated into the composer's personal voice that no outstanding traces are left. Perhaps something similar may be said of some earlier composers, but this does not alter the radical difference between the contemporary and historical musical situations.

Eno grew up in the English countryside, in the small Suffolk town of Woodbridge. The decisive musical influences stemmed, however, not from indigenous folk or popular traditions, but from two large U.S. air bases located within five miles of Woodbridge, which eventually housed about 15,000 G.I.'s. The many local cafés had juke-boxes well-stocked with contemporary American popular music, and Eno had a sister who used to go to the PX stores and "come back with all these really very interesting records that you never heard in England otherwise. They never were on the radio."² It was a situation strikingly similar to that of the young Beatles' Liverpool, where sailors brought in the latest American records, which attracted young listeners for their contemporaneity as well as for their exotic quality. Eno has described the curious mix of music he heard like this:

Feeble, weedy English pop music and then the American stuff, full of what I still find to be menace and strangeness. I listened to Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Bo Diddley, I was a listener for a long, long time

² Kurt Loder, "Eno," *Synapse* (Jan./Feb. 1979), 26-7.