

recorder with guitar solos, and then begin the real creative process of blending, mixing, and deleting), Phil Spector (who “understood better than anybody that a recording could do things that could never actually happen”), the Beach Boys, the Jefferson Airplane, and the Byrds (whose experimental and psychedelic approach Eno appreciated), the Beatles (whose 1966 album *Revolver*, recorded on four-track with George Martin at the controls, Eno described as “my favourite Beatles album”), and Simon and Garfunkel (“The song ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water’ [1970] is perfection in its way. I’m told it took 370 hours of studio time to record – that’s longer than most albums, but it is such an incredible *tour de force*. It’s the World Trade Center of production in a way, you might not think that the building is necessarily beautiful, but you cannot help but be impressed by it.”).¹⁶

Although I have argued that Eno’s early solo albums belong in the genre of progressive rock, he has been constantly at pains to dissociate himself from some of the most popular manifestations of that genre. In 1978 he took the following broad view of recent rock history and his place in it:

At the end of the 1960s, there were two mainstreams, one that came from the Beatles, with big sales, and one from the Velvet Underground and the early Who and Bo Diddley – much rougher, more urban and less Gothic. I always felt I was part of that second thing. Technology is a separate issue. It just happened that the fantasy bands got involved in technology because they could afford it, rather than because it was a particular predilection of theirs or particularly belonged with that kind of music.¹⁷

By the “Gothic fantasy bands” Eno doubtless means groups like Yes and Emerson, Lake & Palmer, who managed to turn an unlikely blend of elements – an instrumental virtuosity previously unheard of in rock, a grandeur of conception rivalling that of Mahler and Strauss, a widely expanded harmonic and rhythmic technique (with roots in both nineteenth-century art music and jazz), and an infatuation with the possibilities of synthesizers and twenty-four-track recording technology – into one of the most commercially successful musical blends of the era. Eno has attacked this kind of music on a number of occasions, calling it “grotesque” in one instance,¹⁸ making a snide remark about “the well-known and gladly departed orchestral rock tradition” in another,¹⁹ decrying “really dumb bands who’ve tried to make a kind of academic form out of rock music” in yet another.²⁰ What has apparently bothered Eno most about progressive rock of this type is not its seeming to want to claim a vicarious and inappropriate

¹⁶ Brown, “On Record: Brian Eno,” 94. Paul Simon has said that “Bridge Over Troubled Water” “took somewhere around ten days to two weeks to record, and then it had to be mixed.” Jon Landau, “Paul Simon: ‘Like a Pitcher of Water,’” in Ben Fong-Torres, ed., *The Rolling Stone Interviews, Vol. 2* (New York: Warner, 1973), 398.

¹⁷ John Rockwell, “The Odyssey of Two British Rockers,” *New York Times*, 23 July 1978, II:16. In the same article, Robert Fripp is quoted expressing much the same distaste as Eno with regard to early- and mid-1970s British progressive rock: “I don’t wish to listen to the philosophical meanderings of some English halfwit who is circumnavigating some inessential point of experience in his life.”

¹⁸ Tannenbaum, “Cage and Eno,” 68.

¹⁹ Eno, “Pro Session – Part I,” 57.

²⁰ Moore, “Eno = MC Squared,” 67.