

The rhythm instruments started becoming very important. Instead of being simply rhythm, that is to say simply things that gave you a comforting thud in the lower part of the sound spectrum, they started having real vocal lines and singing parts, and a kind of compression started taking place where the voice wasn't the dominant, melodic instrument, necessarily. [In the Supremes' "Reflections"], you hear a number of interesting things going on: first of all the electronics are being used in an interesting way, secondly, the acoustic space is quite fictional, thirdly, the bass guitar has quite as much to say as Diana Ross's voice, I think.²⁷

In addition to Tamla/Motown musicians, Eno cited Sly Stone as "one of the formative influences of the 70s, in how he reshuffled all the instrument roles ... he started using rhythm instruments in a vocal fashion and conversely often using the voices in a rhythmic fashion."²⁸ As an example, Eno offered the song "Everyday People" (1969). In Sly's "Thank You" (1970) Eno pointed out that the bass is active to the point of being "the most interesting melody on the track."²⁹ Such examples may be historically naïve to the extent that they underestimate the importance, in much Afro-American music since the nineteenth century, of an active bass line, a heterogeneous sound-ideal, and a spreading of rhythmic duties over the whole ensemble. But in the present context, the point is Eno's fascination with a different approach to texture and studio technique making itself felt in the world of mainstream popular music.

In black music as in white music, Eno finds overindulgence in electronics irritating. "Stevie Wonder's synthesizers are interesting, but in general the machines have been very badly used for decorative effects or as gravy to glue a track together. It's very disappointing."³⁰

One of the musicians, black or white, for whom Eno has shown the highest degree of respect, is a man whose music has always been difficult to pigeonhole into this or that tradition – Jimi Hendrix. In 1975 Eno called Hendrix "probably still the greatest guitar player of all time," but not on the basis of instrumental virtuosity: "He was the first guitar player to realize that the guitar was more than a piece of wood that hung around his neck, and he really understood that there was a relationship between the room acoustics and the amplifier he was using, the whole situation."³¹

This quotation is from a radio interview. Eno proceeded to play a recording of Hendrix's solo electric guitar version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" from the soundtrack to *Woodstock*. When the recording was over, Eno was temporarily stunned into speechlessness by the music. When he had sufficiently recovered, he said, "I think that's one of the most extraordinary historical documents, that piece. The first time I heard it, it just made me cry."³²

²⁷ Amirkhanian, "Eno at KPFA," 22.

²⁸ Amirkhanian, "Eno at KPFA," 23.

²⁹ Dancis, "Studio Plays Big Role, Says Eno," 29.

³⁰ Stephen Demorest, "The Discreet Charm of Brian Eno: An English Pop Theorist Seeks to Redefine Music," *Horizon* 21 (June 1978), 82.

³¹ Amirkhanian, "Eno at KPFA," 21.

³² Amirkhanian, "Eno at KPFA," 22.