

Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*, for example, but the *sound* of the two pieces is very different.⁷

The process is supposed to be interesting in itself. I don't go for that. I think if something doesn't jolt your senses, forget it. It's got to be seductive.⁸

Eno has criticized such things as Nam June Paik's multi-screen video installations and imitations of William Burroughs's "cut-up" technique, in which random bits of text are selected and pasted together: "Sure, 'cut-ups' can be fascinating, but it *does* matter what the input is." The idea "that as long as the process was interesting it didn't really matter what went into it" was

part of the John Cage legacy. The failure of that inheritance is evident when you hear some pieces of systems music that you like, and others that don't hold your attention at all. You come to the inevitable conclusion that the difference doesn't lie in the differing degrees of elegance in the systems, but in their content.⁹

On Listening

Although Eno has never had any formal ear-training, he is evidently listening all the time – and not just to the sounds of what we normally call "music." Taking a cue from Cage, Eno uses his ears to scan the environment, putting himself into a musical-listening mode even in the absence of music. He has frequently criticized musicians, particularly those seduced by the glamour of high-tech electronic instruments, for being unable or unwilling to *listen* to what they are doing. In his 1979 lecture "The Studio As Compositional Tool" he remarked that "almost any arbitrary collision of events listened to enough times comes to seem very meaningful," adding, "There's an interesting and useful bit of information for a composer, I can tell you."¹⁰ These remarks were in the context of his discussion of improvised jazz, but lead far beyond the conventionally "musical" into the realm of environmental sounds. For Eno, music is not necessarily restricted to pieces composed out of relationships between pitches and rhythms:

Classical music works around a body of "refined" sounds – sounds that are separate from the sounds of the world, pure and musical. There is a sharp distinction between "music" and "noise," just as there is a distinction between the musician and the audience. I like blurring

⁷ Robert Palmer, "Brian Eno, New Guru of Rock, Going Solo," *New York Times*, 13 March 1981, III:17.

⁸ Steven Grant, "Brian Eno Against Interpretation," *Trouser Press* 9 (Aug. 1982), 29.

⁹ Hutchinson, "Eno: Place #13," n.p.

¹⁰ Brian Eno, "Pro Session: The Studio as Compositional Tool – Part I," lecture delivered at New Music New York, the first New Music America Festival, sponsored in 1979 by the Kitchen, excerpted by Howard Mandel, *Down Beat* 50 (July 1983), 56. "Part II" of this lecture appeared in the next issue of *Down Beat* (Aug. 1983).