

show, featuring such immortal monuments to musical bad taste and kitsch as “Little Puppy” and “Living with a Hernia.” Analogs to Eno’s strange genre might also be found in nineteenth-century compositions like Liszt’s *Totentanz* (“Dance of Death”) or in the horrors of expressionist pieces like Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire* or *The Book of the Hanging Gardens* – pieces whose utterly humorless sense of dread in some respects parallels Eno’s strange contributions more closely than does the slapstick grotesquerie of the novelty or demented song.

“Strange” in the sense the term is used here may carry the connotation of the conceptually weird, or it may simply mean highly unusual, highly individuated in a musical sense, the total sound texture owing little to specific generic compositional precedents. It is in the same sense that much of the material on such progressive rock albums of the same period as Gentle Giant’s *Octopus* or King Crimson’s *Larks’ Tongues in Aspic* may be classed as “strange.” The conceptually weird and the musically individuated, however, often overlap in the same piece.

Such is the case in “Driving Me Backwards” (*Warm Jets*). A near-psychotic din is created by Eno’s relentless hammering on a piano that is out of tune (or electronically treated to sound so), the double-tracked vocal (widely used in rock since the early 1960s to add depth and coloration to a single singer’s voice, double tracking here serves as an almost literal metaphor of the schizophrenic personality), the thudding, boomy bass, and Fripp’s metallicly treated electric guitar machinations. The lyrics consist of inexplicable, tormented expressionistic outbursts: “Ah Luana’s black reptiles/Sliding around/Make chemical choices/And she responds as expected/To the only sound/Hysterical voices.” Eno’s own exegesis of “Driving Me Backwards,” written some dozen years after the fact, is a model of rationality. He called the song

a mixture of a series of thoughts about controlled existence – the desirability of being stripped of choice if you like ... [The song] has a combination of qualities that would not have been arrived at by anyone else, since it is the product of my musical naïveté on the one hand, and my ability to manipulate extant ideas on the other. In this track as in most of the others [on the album], the musical idea is very simple – there are only three chords, each different from the other by only one note [C minor, A diminished, and Ab major], there are no tempo changes and the tempo [*sic*] is simply 4/4. I enjoy working with simple structures such as these for they are transparent – comparable to a piece of graph paper and its grids. The grid serves as the reference point for the important information – the graph line itself.<sup>8</sup>

We are fortunate to have an artist so willing and eager to take us into his workshop, though in this case the contradiction between the strict rationality of the process and the overpowering irrationality of the product may seem extreme to the point of absurdity. Music history, however, shows us numerous composers who have been able to explain and articulate at a very rational level the logic of their techniques – techniques used, however, in the service of a powerfully expressive intent. Alban Berg, with the formidably logical forms and pitch structures of his nevertheless almost wantonly expressionist opera *Wozzeck*, may be cited as an example.

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<sup>8</sup> Eno and Mills, *More Dark than Shark*, 22.