**David Bowie**

“As was the case with Miles Davis in jazz, Bowie has come not just to represent his innovations but to symbolize modern rock as an idiom in which literacy, art, fashion, style, sexual exploration and social commentary can be rolled into one.” Rolling Stone magazine  
  
Bowie is the man who elevated his music to what can only be described as an art form.  
  
Driven by an entirely deeper dynamic than most pop artists, David Bowie inhabits a very special world of extraordinary sounds and endless vision. Unwilling to stay on the treadmill of rock legend and avoiding the descent into ever demeaning and decreasing circles of cliché, Bowie writes and performs what he wants, when he wants. His absence from the endless list of “important events” has just fuelled interest. Constant speculation about what the guy was up to has even led some to wonder if this is his greatest reinvention ever. David Jones!  
  
David Robert Jones was born in Brixton on January 8, 1947. At age thirteen, inspired by the jazz of the London West End, he picked up the saxophone and called up Ronnie Ross for lessons. Early bands he played with – The Kon-Rads, The King Bees, the Mannish Boys and the Lower Third –provided him with an introduction into the showy world of pop and mod, and by 1966 he was David Bowie, with long hair and aspirations of stardom rustling about his head. Kenneth Pitt signed on as his manager, and his career began with a handful of mostly forgotten singles but a head full of ideas. It was not until 1969 that the splash onto the charts would begin, with the legendary Space Oddity (which peaked at No. 5 in the UK). Amidst his musical wanderings in the late 60s, he experimented with mixed media, cinema, mime, Tibetan Buddhism, acting and love. The album, originally titled David Bowie then subsequently Man of Words, Man of Music, pays homage to all the influences of the London artistic scene. It shows the early song-writing talent that was yet to yield some of rock-n-roll’s finest work, even if it would take the rest of the world a few years to catch up with him.  
  
  
**Early 70s**  
Bowie’s first album, The Man Who Sold The World, was recorded as an entity in itself and marks the first definitive creative stretch for the listener. Mick Ronson’s guitars are often referred to as the birth point of heavy metal, and certainly the auspicious beginnings of glam rock can be traced here. The album was released by Mercury in April 1971 to minimal fanfare and Bowie took his first trip to the United States to promote it that spring. In May of the same year, Duncan Zowie Haywood Bowie was born to David and his then wife Angela.  
  
  
RCA was the next label to sign Bowie, and after a trip to America to complete the legalities, he returned to London to record two albums nearly back to back. Hunky Dory was built from a six-song demo that had enticed the label to sign him and features Changes and Life On Mars. Almost immediately, it was followed up by the instant classic The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars.  
  
1972 was certainly the year that Bowie began to get a glimpse of the power of pop. GQ editor Dylan Jones said of the landmark 1972 Top of The Pops appearance on 6th July “This is the performance that turned Bowie into a star, embedding his Ziggy Stardust persona into the nations consciousness.” The sound of the suburbs suddenly got a whole lot louder. Previewed in London that spring, his rock-n-roll creation Ziggy Stardust staged one of the most spectacular and innovative live shows to date, and the craze that followed was the beginning of his superstar myth.   
  
The summer of 1972 was also a busy one for him in the studio, as he produced albums for Lou Reed (Transformer) – a seminal record that to this day enthuses critics the world over and spawned the surprise leftfield hit, Walk on the Wild Side, a fairytale of the dark side of New York. The fact that David had also co-produced the terrifying and vastly influential Raw Power by Iggy and The Stooges that year, only added to his growing reputation as an artist to be taken most seriously. Bowie later went on to produce further Iggy albums – The Idiot and Lust for Life and co-wrote China Girl from Let’s Dance with the Detroit demon. He also produced Mott the Hoople (All The Young Dudes, for which he wrote the hit title track).   
  
The US “Ziggy” tour began in September, with sold-out shows full of theatrically inspired Japanese costumes, snarling guitars courtesy of Mick Ronson, and a bold, daring approach to performance that propelled the audience into a rock-n-roll fervor. He abruptly put his own creation to rest on June 3, 1973 with the pronouncement: “Of all the shows on the tour, this one will stay with us the longest because not only is this the last show of the tour, but it is the last show we will ever do.” This surprised everyone in the house – not least the members of his band.  
  
Amidst the Ziggy fever, Aladdin Sane was released in April 1973, inspired by his experiences in America while touring. After putting the “Stardust” show to bed, he travelled to France to begin work on his next albums. Pin-Ups was the last time that Bowie would record an album with Mick Ronson on guitar and Ken Scott at the production helm. His tribute to the artists that he admired in the London years of 1964-67 was released in October 1973. In April of 1973, his proto-Bladerunner project Diamond Dogs debuted full of tension and angst standing in stark contrast to the disco music that was beginning to crowd the airwaves. In the summer of 1974, he undertook his greatest US tour yet, with an enormous set and choreographed tableaus. The double album David Live was recorded in Philadelphia’s Tower Theatre, and serves as a souvenir of this tour.  
  
**Mid 70s**   
The two previous albums showed hints of Bowie's interest in the music he heard in America. Authentic soul with a unique UK perspective meant this was far from being a homage. The most direct result of this fascination is the rhythmic, soul-laden Young Americans, released in 1975. A collaboration with John Lennon on Fame came out of an impromptu session at Electric Ladyland in New York and was a last-minute addition to the LP. It resulted in Bowie's first ever No. 1 single in the US. The album also featured another David discovery soon to be better known as R&B singer Luther Vandross. He contributed backing vocals alongside the other legendary young American musicians such as Willie Weeks, Andy Newmark, David Sanborn and Mike Garson.   
  
Not long after the album came out, he moved to Los Angeles and starred in the cult classic Nic Roeg science fiction film The Man Who Fell To Earth. After completion of filming, he almost immediately returned to the studio for the recording of Station to Station, a travelogue of sorts. The White Light tour followed, this time with an electronic-driven line-up, played out with Brecht- inspired theatricality. A compilation of hits, ChangesOneBowie, was released by RCA in May 1976. Never one to stay in one place too long, shortly after his tour finished, David relocated to the Schonenberg section of Berlin.  
  
**Late 70s**   
Whether Bowie was where the action was or the action was where David Bowie was, sometimes it was hard to assess, but for sure the seismic plates of history were shifting under the studio during the next recording. The iron curtain still firmly divided Europe and nowhere more so than in Berlin where David and Iggy were famously holed up. The subsequent music provided an atmosphere backdrop to the emerging punk scene in London.  
  
A suitably mysterious return to the UK stage playing keyboards with Iggy in 77 cemented the myth. The stark black and white stage lights highlighted the unseen all persuasive Bowie influence and fitted the mood of the times perfectly. He was soon to step back out of the shadows.   
  
Low and “Heroes” were recorded with collaborators Brian Eno, Tony Visconti and he adopted new approaches to the songwriting process. In an interview for French radio, Bowie said, “Berlin has the strange ability to make you write only the important things. Anything else you don’t mention… and in the end you produce Low.” Surrealism and experimentation were the themes of the day, and the incorporation of cut-and-paste techniques into unique instrumentation birthed what are now heralded as luminary ambient soundscapes. Released in 1977, Low confused RCA and though the masses were not quite sure what to make of the effort, the single Sound and Vision eventually hit No. 2 on the British charts.   
  
The second in his three-album triptych, “Heroes” prominently features Robert Fripp on guitar and a more optimistic outlook overall. One of his greatest singles, the title track from this album recounts a romantic liaison between lovers near the Berlin Wall. His next foray into film occurred in Just A Gigolo, which he described as “all my thirty-two Elvis Presley movies rolled into one.” March of 1978 found him on tour again, and during a May break he narrated Peter and the Wolf with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the first of many children's projects he would consistently support over the years (now out of print, the result was a collectible green-vinyl album). Stage was released in September 1978, culled from his recent tour of the States, and features live material from his “Berlin” period. A relocation to Switzerland was to follow, abandoned frequently due to his ever developing love affair with the exotic Indonesia, Africa and the Far East.  
  
Recorded in France, Lodger was released in May 1979, and by the end of the year he was again in the studio. Rehearsals also began for his Broadway debut, in the part of the The Elephant Man, which opened in September 1980 to rave reviews.  
  
**The 80s**   
In the same month, Scary Monsters was released and Bowie also recorded Under Pressure in 1981 in Switzerland and the song appeared on Queen's album Hot Space the following year. The song reached No. 1 in the UK.  
  
After this period, he dropped out of the public eye, while remaining involved with various film projects. 1982 saw him playing the male lead in The Hunger, the role of Celliers in the captivating World War 2 drama Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence, alongside Tom Conti and Ryuichi Sakamoto …writing the theme song for the movie Cat People. Another greatest hits compilation, ChangesTwoBowie, came out in 1982.   
  
In October 83, RCA released Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture Album, capturing the energy of Ziggy and the Spiders during their last show. Shortly thereafter, the movie, originally filmed in 1973, was also released.  
  
Officially signed to EMI in 1983, the album Let’s Dance followed along with the world-encompassing Serious Moonlight tour. Bowie had brilliantly reinvented himself once again. This time as the ultimate rock star, just in time to be at the forefront of stadium rock and a new era of mass media fuelled mega stardom. Selling at least 7 million copies, Let’s Dance became the most commercially successful album of his career and massively influenced a whole host of artists, including Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet and Boy George.   
  
  
The album, produced by Chic mastermind Nile Rodgers, was perhaps the most straightforward album of his career. It was a collection of elegantly produced, impeccably sung dance floor numbers including the Motown-styled Modern Love, the darkly romantic China Girl (first cut with Iggy Pop in Berlin) and a remake of the movie theme Cat People. All of the above were substantial radio hits, as was the glossy and romantic title track. The upbeat romantic theme extended to his next album Tonight (1984), though the single Loving the Alien drew a prophetic scenario on the Islam/Christian tensions.  
  
A moving appearance at Live Aid (where he dedicated “Heroes” to his young son), a duet single with Mick Jagger, and the heavily theatrical Glass Spider tour (with lead guitar by Peter Frampton) all kept up Bowie's popularity. In 1988 brought the biggest surprise of all. Another sharp left turn: he had formed a new band, Tin Machine, with the Sales Brothers (Hunt and Tony, sons of Soupy) and a hot guitar find from Boston, Reeves Gabrels. He was adamant that this would be a full-time band, not a superstar solo project. On their two million-selling albums (plus a limited edition live disc), Tin Machine proved their mettle as a modern alternative live act, with a stripped-down guitar sound, all-new material and a few real surprises (a Pixies cover!). Some fans loved it, others were confused by it and Tin Machine was on hiatus by 1992. Meanwhile, Bowie set out on Sound and Vision with his first full-fledged greatest hits tour, recruiting long-time collaborator Adrian Belew to play lead guitar. In an innovative move, fans were allowed to pick the songs via phone poll. An album of the same name accompanied the tour on Rykodisc.  
  
  
**90s**   
1993 brought the long-awaited return to solo projects Black Tie White Noise and one of rock’s first CD–ROMs entitled Jump. With Nile Rodgers again producing, the album came close to summing up every period of Bowie: with the opening instrumental The Wedding (inspired by Bowie's own marriage to model Iman) offering a dance-and-house-inspired, brighter-toned return to the sound of Low; the single Jump They Say harking back to funkier times; and the old Cream tune I Feel Free marking a long-awaited reunion with Ziggy-era partner Mick Ronson (sadly, Ronson passed away soon after). Reaching No. 1 in the UK album charts, Black Tie White Noise reassured fans that Bowie's creative curiosity was by no means exhausted.  
  
  
By 1994, Bowie and Eno were again collaborating in the studio. The result was the concept album Outside released as part of a new deal with Virgin Records. This complex project touches on the increasing obsession with the human body as art and the paganization of western society. With its package-arts broken-down style, its haunted sound of ruin and its non-linear story-line of art, murder and technology, Outside predates the new sensibility of movies such as Seven, Copycat and the TV shows The X-Files and Millennium. As befits the multiphrenic nature of outsider art and emotion, Bowie sings in any number of voices: one minute the melodramatic crooner, another the stylized Londoner, another the quiet, intimate recluse of the Berlin years. Or, he is vari-speeded among the album’s seven characters. The song The Hearts Filthy Lesson, made the soundtrack of one of the biggest and darkest movie hits of that year in David Fincher’s Seven.  
  
1996 was an extraordinarily active year even by David’s own feverish standards, switching styles and moods effortlessly, embarking on a confrontational tour around the US with Nine Inch Nails and performing acoustically with Neil Young and Pearl Jam at the Bridge Benefit Concert in San Francisco. He had a triumphant summer headlining Roskilde and the Phoenix Festival, and his electric performance at the VH-1 Fashion Awards on October 25, where he debuted his new single Little Wonder. Then there was the new album Earthling, all very direct, hard-hitting. The dramatic cover art featured David in an Alexander McQueen designed Union Jack coat in a slightly surreal British pastoral setting. The album arose out of the dynamic achieved and harnessed by the end of that summer's tour. The band working on the projects featured Gail Ann Dorsey on bass and vocals, Mike Garson on keyboards, Reeves Gabrels on guitar and synths, and Zachary Alford on drums, the nucleus of the touring outfit. The record features the avant-garde drum-n-bass extravaganza and top 20 UK hit Little Wonder and the crushing Dead Man Walking, a reflection on getting older.   
  
As always Bowie was at the cutting the edge with the first ever download of a song distributed through the internet in 1996, Telling Lies. 350 thousand young Americans downloaded a copy. A new age had begun and hardly anybody realised the ramifications, especially the luddite record company bosses of the time. Not for the last time, David was at least ten years ahead of the madding crowd.  
  
The next year 1997 was to see a controversial collaboration with Eno in the shape of the I’m Afraid Of Americans single (“Not as hostile about Americans as Born In The USA” – Bowie).  
  
  
This track, complete with the spontaneous Dom & Nic video that found Trent Reznor chasing David through the streets of Greenwich Village, hung around the US charts for three months, finishing the project on a real high. Despite the title, Bowie's American influence seemed to be growing. He has been cited as a guiding star by The Smashing Pumpkins, Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails, among others. He even reached into American film: the movie Basquiat, co-starring Gary Oldman, Christopher Walken and Dennis Hopper, saw him playing the character he immortalized in his 1972 song Andy Warhol. The film’s director was pre-eminent American painter, Julian Schnabel.  
  
  
In January 1997, he celebrated his fiftieth birthday with an all-star performance at New York’s Madison Square Garden. He was joined on stage by old friends Lou Reed, Sonic Youth, Robert Smith, Billy Corgan, Foo Fighters and Frank Black, all of whom played and sang with David to make it one of his most memorable shows. Then he was off once again on a world tour that stormed over fifteen headlining festivals, countless theaters and clubs, and finished with a stadium tour of South America with Nine Inch Nails and No Doubt.  
  
Already highly acclaimed in the fields of art and music, David has been turning his hand to mastering the information superhighway. 1998 saw the launch of BowieNet (www.davidbowie.com). BowieNet is the world's first artist-created Internet service provider.   
  
1999 was as busy a year as ever for Bowie. With his continuing work on his now highly acclaimed BowieNet website (a nominee for the 1999 WIRED Award for Best Entertainment Site of the Year), David has found time to work on a film Exhuming Mr. Rice, in which he plays the title role. The year also saw the launch of the David Bowie Radio Network on the Rolling Stone Radio website; this station runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The station's playlist includes 54 tracks, all personally picked and introduced by David. In May, David received an honorary doctorate in music from Berklee College of Music, Boston. In the past, this prestigious doctorate has also been received by BB King, Sting, James Taylor, Dizzy Gillespie and Quincy Jones. David also made a well publicised and successful foray in the art world with an acclaimed exhibition at the Cork Street Gallery in London. As well as finding time to pick up the Legion d’honneur Award in France.  
  
1999 also saw the growing relationship between David and Placebo flourish. At the annual BRIT Awards ceremony, David joined the band for a performance of the Marc Bolan classic Twentieth Century Boy. The performance went down so well with the public that the Mirror newspaper began a mini-campaign for the track to be released as a single and it was not long before the two artists were to team again.   
  
  
July saw David voted as the biggest music star of the 20th century, beating Mick Jagger and Noel Gallagher, by readers of The Sun newspaper. In the same month David was voted the sixth Greatest Star of The Century by Q Magazine and its readers. In this poll David was the third highest-ranking star who is still alive.  
  
  
Most importantly October 1999 saw the release of a brand new studio album. Hours... which was David’s twenty-third solo album, harkening a return to the sounds of the Hunky Dory days. Written solely with long-time collaborator Reeves Gabrels over the last year, Hours… could be described as one of David's most autobiographical records to date. Tracks include Thursday’s Child, Survive and The Dreamers. The themes of loss and regret throughout the album are likely to strike hearts universally. With such personal lyrics as “Sometimes I cry my heart to sleep,” David is evoking emotions recognizable to us all. This album deals more with real life opposed to imagery and fantasy.  
  
The Hours... touring schedule ended in spectacular style with David headlining the closing night of the 2000 Glastonbury festival in front of an estimated 150,000 people. Reportedly the largest attendance at the event ever and a far cry from an earlier appearance at the inaugural Glastonbury with Hawkwind in front of a couple of thousand people. Backstage catering consisted of milk and cheese in Michael Eavis kitchen then. This time, the banners fluttered in the wind and the crowd stretched as far as the eye could see. A 21 song set saw David open with Wild is the Wind and finished with the ambiguously titled I’m afraid of Americans. A fitting close to what was a spectacular year.  
  
**2001 and beyond**  
Following the end of the Hours... campaign David enjoyed a period out of the public eye lightly peppered with some key spectacular live performances. For two consecutive years, he has pledged his support to the Tibet Freedom House shows at New York’s Carnegie Hall alongside luminaries such as Philip Glass, Patti Smith, Moby and Beastie Boy Adam Yauch to aid the campaign for a free Tibet. Each year has seen a very different performance from David, one year had Moby on guitar delivering a rocking version of “Heroes” and the next saw a string driven rendition of the rarely performed Space Oddity with Adam Yauch on bass.   
  
There is never a “quiet” time in the life of David Bowie and during this period, David was bestowed the honor of being voted the most influential artist of all time by the UK’s tastemaker tome the NME. In addition, another life changing event took place, the birth of David and Iman’s first child Alexandria Zahra Jones. Bowie took this time to savor fatherhood but also used the time to write a series of new songs which would form the basis for a new album.  
  
  
David was in New York on September 11th, and in the aftermath David showed support for his adopted city by performing a short but emotional set at The Concert for New York City at Madison Square Garden. He opened the show with a raw rendition of the Simon and Garfunkel classic America and followed with an uplifting and barnstorming rendition of his own “Heroes”. All of those whom attended the show and the millions of folk whom saw the show broadcast live on TV can’t help but to have been moved by the sentiments expressed in both of the songs David performed.  
  
Following on from that emotional night, the series of new songs that David had started work on led to a much heralded reunion with Tony Visconti which in turn resulted in a new album Heathen and a change of outlook towards the music industry and the setting up of his own label Iso Records which has now linked up with Columbia Records to release what is probably the most eagerly awaited album of his career.  
  
“Tony and I had been wanting to work together again for a few years now,”says David. “Both of us had fairly large commitments and for a long time we couldn't see a space in which we could get anything together. As spring came around, last year, things began to ease up. I told Mark Plati and my band that I was going to disappear for a while and put this thing together with Tony. They were very understanding, they’ve worked with me long enough to know that we would be back together again before long.”  
  
So, diaries cleared, Bowie and Visconti set about compiling what you might call a location report, just outside of Woodstock in New York State. “I’d been told by guitarist David Torn of a new studio that was near completion called Allaire. Tony and I [took] a trip up a few weeks before we started work there, just to suss it out. In fact, T-Bone Burnett was working there with Natalie Merchant at the time. It’s remote, silent and inspirational. We couldn't believe what a find it was.”  
  
So taken was he with the setting, David didn’t come back to New York again until the record was complete, living in the grounds with his family and eating in a communal dining room. A famously early riser, he put that to good use as Heathen began to come sharply into focus. “I’d get up around six most mornings and spend them in the studio putting together my chord structures and melodies and words, finding sounds that I wanted to use. Then around ten, Tony would get in and we’d go to work.”  
  
Bowie’s old friend Pete Townshend’s contribution to the album, playing lead guitar on Slow Burn, was not his first with Bowie, as listeners to Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps) will remember. Foo Fighters Dave Grohl took the lead on the Neil Young cover I’ve Been Waiting.  
  
For a further surprise, there’s more Bowie instrumentation on Heathen than anything in memory. “I was delighted that so much of what I played remained on the finished work. That’s me playing drums over my own loop on the Pixies cover Cactus. In fact the only thing I didn’t play on that track was bass. That was Tony Visconti. Nearly all the synth work on Heathen is mine and some of the piano.”  
  
And the title? “Heathenism is a state of mind”, says Bowie. “You can take it that I’m referring to one who does not see his world. He has no mental light. He destroys almost unwittingly. He cannot feel any God’s presence in his life. He is the 21st Century man. There’s no theme or concept behind Heathen, just a number of songs, but somehow there is a thread that runs through it that is quite as strong as any of my thematic type albums.”  
  
Some of the new songs such as Slow Burn and Afraid from Heathen got their first public airing in early May of 2002 at the Robert De Niro organized Tribeca Film Festival in New York which was put together to help revitalize the spirits of the downtown area.   
  
The release of Heathen was accompanied by a series of concerts across Europe and the USA most notably David’s curatorship of the prestigious two week long British Meltdown arts festival involving acts as diverse as The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, Suede, comedian Harry Hill, Coldplay, Television and The Dandy Warhols. David performed Low in its entirety alongside Heathen as part of the festival.  
  
A year later the Reality album was launched with the world’s largest interactive ‘live by satellite’ event and was followed by the rapturously received and critically acclaimed A Reality Tour of the world.  
  
Apart from the odd rare sighting at a charity function and one or two snatched paparazzi shots, David has kept an extremely low profile, popping up for two stunning performances with Arcade Fire in Central Park 2005 and again in September 2006 at New York’s Radio City Hall. That certainly woke everyone up!  
In 2006 he joined Pink Floyd legend Dave Gilmour on two of Floyd’s best-known songs – Arnold Layne and Comfortably Numb at the Royal Albert Hall.  
  
2006 also saw Bowie return to acting with the Chris Nolan-directed The Prestige (#1 at the box office).  
  
In May 2007, Bowie was the curator of the highly successful 10-day High Line arts and music festival in New York. In June, he was honored at the 11th Annual Webby Awards (known as the “Oscars of the Internet”) with the Webby Lifetime Achievement Award for pushing the boundaries between art and technology. Later in 2007, Bowie starred as himself in an acclaimed episode of Extras, Ricky Gervais’ series on HBO.   
  
2012 saw the erection of a plaque in Heddon Street, London to commemorate the extraordinary influence of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars and of course David himself. A large group of media and fans assembled for the occasion; were treated to a moving speech from Gary Kemp who said, “Ziggy was the ultimate messianic rock star, and with him David Bowie successfully blurred the lines not just between boys and girls, but himself and his creation. Bowie was Ziggy come to save us – and I bought him hook, eyeliner and haircut. It seems right that it should be the job of a fan boy and I am very honored.”   
  
Further excitement accompanied the announcement in 2012, that the David Bowie Archive had given unprecedented access to the prestigious Victoria and Albert museum for an exhibition to be curated solely by the V&A. It is the first time a museum has been given access to the David Bowie Archive.  
  
2013  
On January 8, 2013, quite without fanfare and out of the blue, David Bowie did something nobody really expected. He released a new single entitled 'Where Are We Now?' and announced the release of a new album in March. The album, 'The Next Day' is Bowie's 30th studio album and his first new album in 10 years.  
  
The next chapter has surely been written by this most mysterious and important of artists.  
  
www.davidbowie.com