

GLAM

MUSIC IN SOUND AND VISION

ROCK



SIMON PHILO

GLAM ROCK

Tempo: A Rowman & Littlefield Music Series on Rock, Pop, and Culture

Series Editor: Scott Calhoun

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Music in Sound and Vision

Simon Philo

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For Linda and Amelie—
“When you rock and roll with me / No one else I’d
rather be.”

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FOREWORD

You are holding here in your hands the work of an astrophysicist of popular music. Simon Philo peered into the universe of rock 'n' roll, with finely tuned instruments and his finely attuned knowledge of its history, to map, chart, and better understand glam rock. He traced its origins back to a kind of big bang moment in the 1950s that emitted pulses and particles that formed stars, some of which were named Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard. As these stars aligned into the constellation rock 'n' roll and then collided with American and British cultures, a show of “northern lights” began. Some say the sky show was harder to see for about a decade as the 1960s burned white hot with earthbound rockers. But as the 1970s began, a Starman appeared on television, visible for the first time to the naked eye, and David Bowie turned our gaze up, out, and beyond. The show was back on again, with rock, roll, and the glamorous splendor of heretofore unearthly sounds and sights.

Consider this book a popular presentation from a scientist who can speak the language of the people and illuminate specifics with the light of bigger contexts. Following his previous writing for this series, *British Invasion: The Crosscurrents of Musical Influence*, Philo develops the story of glam as a socially, politically, musically, and aesthetically vital stage in the evolution of twentieth-century popular culture. He plots its course and the course of the 1970s as a moment of realizing more public, performative statements of personal identity, and notes the confluence of these two culture-shaping streams. While Bowie's radiance

commands center stage for a while, Philo's scope is set to wide. Bowie alone does not a star cluster make, and thus Philo explores the compositions and influences of first-generation glam acts such as T. Rex, Roxy Music, Sweet, Slade, and Queen, noting along the way some of their more permanent influences on musical groups since the 1970s.

Glam opened vistas, stimulated the senses, reoriented rock 'n' roll's history, and probably still leaves each person who encounters it somewhere between gobsmacked and wonderstruck. Like watching an eclipse, seeing a shooting star, or holding a meteorite in the palm of your hand, a direct encounter with glam's sounds and visions is an experience you shouldn't pass up anytime the opportunity presents itself. But how nice it is to also have someone help you know more about what it is, where it came from, and how it relates to you, as Simon Philo does here.

Scott Calhoun, Series Editor

TIMELINE

World and Cultural Events

April 1948: Marshall Plan secures financial aid for postwar reconstruction; UK receives billions of dollars in loans and grants.

Glam Events

September 26, 1945: Bryan Ferry born in Co. Durham.

January 8, 1947: David Jones (David Bowie) born in London.

September 30, 1947: Mark Feld (Marc Bolan) born in London.

December 1955: Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" at no. 1 in the UK, signaling arrival of rock 'n' roll.

June 1964: King Bees, with David Jones on lead vocals, release "Liza Jane." It fails to chart.

- November 1965:** Release of Marc Bolan's debut single "The Wizard." It fails to chart.
- March 1967:** Release of Velvet Underground's debut LP.
- April 1967:** 14-hour "Technicolor Dream," a happening in London. Pink Floyd perform, Lennon in attendance; John's Children, with Bolan on guitar, release "Desdemona."
- June 1, 1967:** *Sgt. Pepper* LP released.
- June 1967:** Release of David Bowie's eponymous debut LP. It fails to chart.
- July 1967:** Sexual Offences Act decriminalizes homosexual acts in private between consenting men of 21 and over. Only applies to England and Wales.
- July 1967:** Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, having been initially jailed for drug offenses, are released on appeal; the Beatles perform "All You Need Is Love" to a global TV audience of 400 million.
- October 1967:** UK reports worst ever monthly trade deficit; "death of hippie" ceremony held in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury.
- June 1968:** Stonewall riots in New York mark the beginnings of the gay rights movement.
- August 1968:** Tyrannosaurus Rex's "One Inch Rock" is released. It will make the UK Top 30.
- July 1969:** Moon landing.
- August 1969:** Woodstock Festival.
- September 1969:** Bowie's "Space Oddity" is released, and

will go on to reach the UK Top Five.

December 1969: Murder of a fan at Rolling Stones' free concert at Altamont Speedway, Northern California.

February 1970: First National Women's Liberation Conference, Oxford, UK.

June 1970: In the UK, the Conservative Party regains power after six years of Labour Party rule, with a 30-seat majority.

July 1970: First issue of UK publication the *Ecologist*.

October 1970: Gay Liberation Front founded.

March 28, 1970: Live debut of Bowie's proto-glam band, Hype.

April 1970: Beatles break up.

June 1970: Kinks release "Lola."

August 1970: 600,000 attend the Isle of Wight Festival to see Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, the Who, Joni Mitchell, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Sly Stone.

September 1970: Jimi Hendrix dies.

October 1970: T. Rex releases "Ride a White Swan."

November 1970: US release of Velvet Underground's *Loaded*—last LP with Lou Reed.

January 1971: First British soldier killed in active service in Northern Ireland in 50 years.

January 1, 1971: Slade plays first of the year's 150 gigs at Wolverhampton Civic Hall.

January–February 1971: Bowie makes first visit to the US.

February 1971: Alice Cooper's "Eighteen" in Billboard Top 30.

March–April 1971: T. Rex's "Hot Love" is UK's no. 1 for six weeks. TV appearances confirm the arrival of glam.

September 1971: Bowie in the US to sign with RCA; also meets Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, and Andy Warhol.

September 1971: Release of T. Rex's *Electric Warrior*. Glam's first UK no. 1 LP will be the year's best-seller.

November 1971: National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) begins an overtime ban.

November 1971: Slade's "Coz I Luv You" gives the band the first of its six UK no. 1s; Bowie records the bulk of *Ziggy Stardust* LP in just one week.

December 1971: Release of Bowie's *Hunky Dory*.

January 1972: Miners begin national strike; in what will become known as "Bloody

January 1972: Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* on general release in the UK; Bowie "outs"

Sunday,” British troops shoot dead 14 unarmed people in Derry, Northern Ireland.

February 1972: Strike ends in victory for the mineworkers, who are awarded a 20% pay raise.

March 1972: UK government takes direct control of Northern Ireland.

June 1972: Watergate break-in.

July 1972: Collapse of secret talks between the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA); first issue of second-wave feminist magazine *Spare Rib*.

himself in an interview with Michael Watts in *Melody Maker*.

February 25, 1972: T. Rex plays a disastrous show at NYC’s Carnegie Hall.

March 18, 1972: T. Rex plays to 20,000 at London’s Empire Pool. It is the height of “Trexstasy.” T. Rex will sell an estimated 16 million records in just over a year.

June 1, 1972: Bob Fosse’s *Cabaret* goes on general release in the UK with an “X” rating.

June 1972: Release of *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.

July 1972: Bowie performs “Starman” on *Top of the Pops*; release of Mott the Hoople’s version of glam anthem “All the Young Dudes.”

July 8, 1972: Bowie headlines at London’s Royal Festival Hall with Lou Reed joining him on versions of “Waiting for the Man,” “White Light / White Heat,” and “Sweet Jane.”

August 1972: 60,000 attend the 10-hour Rock ’n’ Roll Show at Wembley featuring Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Bill Haley.

August 1972: Roxy Music performs “Virginia Plain” on *Top of the Pops*; Bowie works with Lou

Reed on the latter's *Transformer* LP.

September 1972: Slade's "Mama Weer All Crazee Now" gives the band its third UK no. 1 in under 12 months; David Bowie kicks off first major North American tour in Cleveland and plays Carnegie Hall at the end of the month.

November 1972: Release of "The Jean Genie."

December 1972: Ringo Starr-directed T. Rex movie *Born to Boogie* goes on general UK release.

December 31, 1972: Estimated 24 million working days "lost" to industrial action in the UK in 1972.

January 1973: UK joins European Economic Community (EEC); Green Party founded as PEOPLE Party; cease-fire in Vietnam.

March 1973: Last US combat troops out of Vietnam; IRA bombs mainland UK, leaving one dead and 200 injured.

January 1973: Sweet's "Blockbuster" at UK no. 1 for five weeks; Bowie begins 100-day world tour in NYC on January 25.

March 1973: Release of Roxy Music's *For Your Pleasure*; Slade's "Cum On Feel the Noize" at no. 1 for four weeks.

April 1973: Pink Floyd's LP *Dark Side of the Moon* at no. 1 in the US; in this year British acts—Floyd, George Harrison, Wings, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Jethro Tull, the Moody Blues, and Elton John—hold the no. 1 position on the Billboard album

chart for a total of 27 weeks; Suzi Quatro's "Can the Can" is UK's no. 1 single for three weeks.

April 13, 1973: Release of Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* LP, with UK record advance orders.

May 1, 1973: Estimated 1.6 million UK workers take strike action in protest of the government's pay restraint policy and price rises.

May–August 1973: Televised hearings into Watergate break-ins.

July 21, 1973: IRA explodes 20 bombs in a single day in Belfast, leaving 11 dead and 100 injured.

July 4, 1973: Bowie "retires" Ziggy at Hammersmith Odeon gig, the last of 61 shows in 53 days.

August 1973: US publication *Creem* runs "The Androgyny Hall of Fame" as a cover story, featuring Bowie at its center with Bolan, Jagger, Alice Cooper, Iggy Pop, and Elvis orbiting around him.

October 1973: Oil crisis precipitated by Egypt's invasion of Israeli-occupied Sinai; OPEC quadruples the price of oil, effectively ending the affluence that had marked the preceding 10 years.

November 1973: UK miners call another overtime ban; UK government declares a state of emergency.

December 18, 1973: IRA bombs in London injure 60.

January 1974: UK government imposes a “three-day week” to ration power consumption; IRA detonates five bombs in London and two in Birmingham.

February 1974: Miners begin national strike; UK prime minister Edward Heath calls a snap general election and promptly loses; IRA bomb kills 12 on a bus carrying army personnel and their families on the M62.

March 1974: Labour’s Harold Wilson becomes prime minister of a minority government; “three-day week” ends.

November 1973: Release of Bowie’s *Pin Ups* and Bryan Ferry’s *These Foolish Things*.

December 1973: *Stranded* gives Roxy Music its first UK no. 1 album; Slade’s “Merry Xmas Everybody” spends a total of five weeks as the UK’s best-selling single. The fastest-selling 45 in UK history, it caps a chart year in which glam singles would hold the top spot for 28 weeks. David Bowie also sets a new record for the number of weeks an act spends on the album chart in a calendar year—182.

January 1974: First Top 10 of the year includes eight glam singles.

February 1974: Mud’s “Tiger Feet” is the UK’s no. 1 for a month and would be the year’s best-selling single. It is also the first in a run of three consecutive glam no. 1s—as it is followed by Suzi Quatro’s “Devil Gate Drive” and Alvin Stardust’s “Jealous Mind.”

May 1974: *Diamond Dogs* is released.

- June 1974:** Bowie is on a six-month tour of North America with the most theatrical (and costly) show ever seen.
- July–August 1974:** BBC technicians strike keeps glam lifeblood *Top of the Pops* off-air for several weeks.
- August 9, 1974:** President Nixon resigns.
- September 1974:** President Ford pardons Nixon.
- October 1974:** Prime Minister Wilson calls a general election to secure a working majority and wins with a slim majority of three.
- October 1974:** Rolling Stones release *It's Only Rock and Roll*—their most glam LP; Queen's "Killer Queen" peaks at no. 2 in the UK.
- November 1974:** IRA murders 21 in Birmingham pub bombings.
- December 1974:** Mud's "Lonely This Christmas" gives glam consecutive Christmas no. 1s; by the end of '74, glam-pop songwriters/producers Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman will be responsible for more singles sold in the UK than the Beatles achieved in any calendar year.
- January 1975:** *Creem* story "Kiss It Goodbye" documents death of glam; *Slade in Flame* movie on general UK release.
- February 1975:** Margaret Thatcher defeats Edward Heath
- February 1975:** Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel's "Make Me

to become leader of the Conservative Party.

April 1975: Fall of Saigon ends Vietnam War.

May 1975: CBS reports that “Britain is drifting slowly toward a condition of ungovernability.”

June 1975: In a UK referendum on EEC membership, 67% vote to remain.

July 1975: UK unemployment is close to 1 million and up nearly 250,000 in just six months.

August 1975: UK inflation hits its peak at almost 27%.

October 1975: Bruce Springsteen declared “future of rock ‘n’ roll” and features on cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*.

March 1976: Wilson resigns as prime minister.

April 1976: James Callaghan secures the Labour Party leadership and so becomes prime minister.

Smile (Come Up and See Me)” spends two weeks at no. 1 on the UK singles chart.

May 1975: Mud’s revivalist retread “Oh Boy” is the UK’s best-selling single for two weeks.

July 1975: “Fame” gives David Bowie his first Billboard no. 1.

November 1975: Rereleased, “Space Oddity” gives David Bowie his first UK no. 1 single.

November 29, 1975: Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody” begins a run of nine weeks at no. 1 in the UK.

January 1976: Bowie releases *Station to Station*.

June 1976: “I Love to Boogie” is T. Rex’s last UK hit single.

August 1976: Start of bitter strike at Grunwick photo processing plant over employees’ right to union representation.

September 1976: As the pound plunges in value against the dollar, Callaghan tells the Labour Party conference delegates that “the cosy world is gone,” while his chancellor, Denis Healey, confirms the UK will seek a massive bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

November 1976: In London, IMF demands huge cuts in public spending as a condition for a loan. Callaghan and Healey lobby for smaller cuts; most of the cabinet simply (and unrealistically) want no cuts at all.

December 1976: Callaghan and Healey successful in persuading both cabinet and IMF to accept modest spending cuts; UK receives the loan.

October 1976: The Damned’s “New Rose” is the UK’s first punk single.

January 1977: Bowie’s *Low* LP is released, featuring “Sound and Vision.” It is the first of his “Berlin Trilogy.”

June 1977: Violent clashes between strikers and police at Grunwick.

January 1978: UK inflation now under 10%.

July 1978: Grunwick strike over, as strikers concede defeat after almost two years.

November 1978: Transport and General Workers Union strike for more pay; other unions follow suit and so precipitate the so-called Winter of Discontent.

January–February 1979: Nationwide strike action peaks in the coldest winter in years.

March 1977: T. Rex on tour with the Damned to promote the release of *Dandy in the Underworld* LP.

April 1977: Studio 54 opens in New York.

September 1977: Marc Bolan killed in a road accident.

October 1977: Release of Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks* LP; rerelease of "Virginia Plain" sees it climb to no. 11 in the UK.

February 1979: "Bowie Night" moves to Covent Garden's Blitz Club. New Romantics are on the rise.

March 1979: Re-formed Roxy Music releases *Manifesto*.

April 1979: Bowie releases "Boys Keep Swinging" from *Lodger* LP.