

Brixton, London, England
January 8, 1947

David Robert Jones is born. He grew up in this house in a city recovering after being severely hit by the German Air Force during World War Two. His mom, a waitress. His dad worked for a children's charity. From an early age, David knew he wanted to be an entertainer when he grew up. He loved singing, dancing, and acting. When David was nine years old, his dad brought him home some American 45s that featured artists like Fats Domino, Elvis Presley, and Little Richard. David later would say that he had "heard God" after first listening to Little Richard's song "Tutti Frutti."¹ From that point forward, he became OBSESSED with American rock 'n' roll.

When David was eleven, he began attending Bromley Technical High School. There he'd have an art teacher who had a big influence on him. His name was Owen Frampton. David would eventually become friends with Owen's son, Peter, over their shared love of music. Owen predicted that David would one day be a big star. David's half-brother, Terry, also had a big influence on him.

When Davie was 15, something happened that would define his entire aesthetic- his buddy George Underwood punched him in the eye during a fight over a girl.² Well George must have felt bad since the punch permanently damaged Davy's eyesight. Hey but it also made him look cool. The punch left one pupil permanently dilated, which made it look like his eyes were two different colors.

Around that time, Davie started his first band, the Konrads. He played saxophone and occasionally sang. They played rock and roll at local youth dances and weddings. George was in the band. Yeah, they made up. Well, the band didn't work out. But Davie kept writing songs anyway. He dropped out of school and informed his parents he wanted to become a pop star. His parents, while supportive, still told him he had to make money. His mom hooked him up with an electrician apprenticeship. Meanwhile, Davie joined another band called the King Bees, but that didn't last long since he was sick of them playing covers and he joined ANOTHER band called the Manish Boys.

Davie was determined and ambitious. After recording a few songs, he wrote a wealthy businessman named John Bloom to fund his music, writing that his music could help Bloom "make another million."³ Well, Bloom didn't respond to this offer, but he did hook up Davie with a dude named Leslie Conn to be his first manager. Woah, that's pretty groovy. Conn produced and promoted Bowie's debut single, "Liza Jane" and got a record label named Vocation Records to release it on June 5, 1964. Eh, "Liza Jane" never caught on. The Manish Boys then recorded a cover of Bobby Bland's "I Pity the Fool" and Parlophone Records would release IT as a single on March 6, 1965, but it also flopped. By that time, Davy had joined yet ANOTHER blues band

¹ Doggett, Peter (January 2007). "Teenage Wildlife". *Mojo Classic* (60 Years of Bowie): 8–9.

² Stokes, Tim (21 September 2024). "[David Bowie: The man who left the Starman with mismatched eyes](#)". *BBC News*.

³ Sandford, Christopher (1997) [1996]. *Bowie: Loving the Alien*. London: Time Warner. ISBN 978-0-306-80854-8.

called the Lower Third. They were heavily influenced by The Who. The Who? Yes, the Who. THEY recorded a song called "You've Got a Habit of Leaving" which Parlophone released on August 20, 1965. After it ALSO flopped, Davie dropped Conn as his manager and decided he wanted to become a mime instead. You heard that right.

Still, though, he just kept coming back to music, continuing to write and record songs. He got a new manager, Ralph Horton, who helped him get a record deal with Pye Records. And it was at this time he changed his stage name. Because there was already a Davy Jones in the popular band the Monkees, and Davy didn't want to be confused with a teen idol, he took the surname "Bowie," after the American folk hero James Bowie and the knife he made popular. I guess it sounded cooler. Pye released Bowie's song "Can't Help Thinking About Me" on January 14, 1966. Well, it also flopped, and shortly afterward Bowie left the Lower Third. On April 1, 1966, Pye released Bowie's first song entirely credited to himself, "Do Anything You Say." Bowie still found a backing band to perform the song called the Buzz. While recording his next single, though, producer Tony Hatch dropped the Buzz and found session musicians. That single was "I Dig Everything," released by Pye on August 19, 1966. Well, "Do Anything You Say" and "I Dig Everything" ALSO flopped. Dang.

Despite this, music industry folks saw lots of potential with this young man named David Bowie, who was now 19 years old. After playing for a short while with the band the Riot Squad, Bowie signed with Deram Records. In October, he recorded a baroque pop song called "Rubber Band," which was much more creative than his previous efforts, and Deram released it on December 2, 1966. While it also was a flop, getting absolutely no radio airplay, critics later would praise the song. In January, Bowie sped up his vocals to sound high pitched to portray a gnome in a song eventually called "The Laughing Gnome," released by Deram on April 14, 1967. Another single. Another flop...although more and more critics were starting to notice Bowie.

They especially adored his debut studio album, called just *David Bowie*, released by Deram on June 1, 1967. The album was a mix of British vaudeville and baroque pop, and it also never really caught on despite having some pretty catchy songs on it. After playing a few small shows to promote it, Bowie became alienated with the direction of his career. Things were not going as he planned. After more than five years of trying to become a pop star, he felt he didn't have much to show for it. He returned to theater and acting, considering giving miming another go. For two years he was kind of lost, still writing songs though.

In April 1969, Bowie met Angela Barnett, and they immediately fell in love, getting married within a year. Barnett would have a dramatically positive effect on Bowie's career. Soon after beginning a relationship with Angela, he'd record a song that would change everything: "Space Oddity," a tale about a fictional astronaut named Major Tom, who ended up being the first of Bowie's several famous recurring characters. The song caught the attention of Mercury Records and its United Kingdom subsidiary Philips, who signed Bowie with a new deal and released "Space Oddity" as a single on July 11, 1969. Perfectly timed, as it was just five days before American astronauts would leave Earth to become the first humans to land on the moon. "Space Oddity" would be David Bowie's first hit song, reaching #5 on the UK Singles chart.

On November 14, 1969, Mercury and Philips released Bowie's second studio album, *David Bowie*. Wait, wasn't his first album ALSO called *David Bowie*? It was. What the heck? That's confusing. Well people ended up just calling the album *Space Oddity* to differentiate the two. Despite the success of the SONG "Space Oddity," the ALBUM *Space Oddity* actually didn't do that well and got mixed reviews.

But hey, at least Bowie was now more motivated to make even better music. He put together a full-time backing band that included drummer Mick Woodmansey, producer and bassist Tony Visconti, and guitarist Mick Ronson. Bowie would sing and play 12-string guitar. They eventually called themselves Hype. Their first live performances didn't go so well, but at least they looked cool, appearing on stage in flamboyant costumes. They lived together in basically what looked like a haunted mansion (Haddon Hall) as they recorded what would become Bowie's THIRD studio album, *The Man Who Sold the World*, released by Mercury and Philips on November 4, 1970. This album marked a dramatic shift for Bowie's music. Unlike the orchestral pop of his previous two albums, *The Man Who Sold the World* was much heavier and darker. Although critics generally praised the album, it was another commercial failure for Bowie. But frankly, *The Man Who Sold the World* was just ahead of its time. Today music historians say it inspired entirely new genres like goth rock and dark wave. The title track off the album is today one of Bowie's most streamed songs on Spotify, in part because Nirvana covered it and released it as a single for their *MTV Unplugged in New York* album.

To promote *The Man Who Sold the World*, Bowie and the Hype toured all over the UK and even played some shows in the United States. It's important to remember that Bowie wasn't just interested in music, he was interested in performance. He wanted to become different characters to provoke and challenge expectations. He began giving interviews wearing dresses, and the press loved it. While in the United States, Bowie became intrigued by two American musicians- Lou Reed and Iggy Pop.

Inspired by those two, as well as Vince Taylor, Andy Warhol, the Legendary Stardust Cowboy and Kansai Yamamoto, he came up with a new character- Ziggy Stardust. Stardust eventually would become Bowie's most iconic alter ego. The character blurred the lines of rock star, alien messiah...and self-destructive celebrity of course.

In the summer of 1971, the Hype was no more, but Bowie recorded a bunch of new songs anyway, this time bringing with producer Ken Scott and bassist Trevor Bolder. These new songs marked a shift back to melodic pop rock. Bowie played many of the instruments himself. He dropped Mercury and Philips this time going with RCA Records, who released what became Bowie's fourth studio album, *Hunky Dory*, on December 17, 1971. While it was another commercial flop, today it's considered one of Bowie's several masterpieces. Seriously, it has aged like fine wine. A big reason why it flopped, actually, was because RCA did a crappy job promoting it. The two singles on *Hunky Dory*, "Changes" and "Life on Mars?," did become minor radio hits. Of course, today they are two of his most recognized songs. Another notable song off *Hunky Dory* that got some radio airplay is "Oh! You Pretty Things," today considered one of

Bowie's greatest songs. Other notable songs? "Kooks," which was dedicated to Bowie's newborn son, Duncan. "Queen Bitch" is dedicated to Lou Reed, "Song for Bob Dylan" is dedicated to...uh...Bob Dylan, and "Andy Warhol" is dedicated to Richard Nixon. Just kidding, Andy Warhol.

"I'm gay, and always have been, even when I was David Jones." That was a quote by Bowie featured in the British music magazine *Melody Maker* on January 22, 1972, which was a big deal at the time as people were generally more homophobic back then. Bowie later clarified that he was bisexual, by the way.

In the months following, Bowie began appearing in public as Ziggy Stardust, the androgynous alien rock star from a distant planet. He dyed his hair red, wore heavy makeup, and strutted around in wild jumpsuits. Now his backing band were the Spiders from Mars, featuring Mick Ronson, Mick Woodmansey, and Trevor Bolder. Their live performances became dramatically more popular after Ziggy and Spiders from Mars appeared. Meanwhile, they had recorded some new stuff that would make up Bowie's fifth studio album, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*...often just shortened to *Ziggy Stardust*. Considered both a rock opera and a concept album centered on the Ziggy character, RCA released it on June 16, 1972. The album featured three huge hits, but all three only became huge long after they first were released: the title track, "Suffragette City" and "Starman." "Starman" did get a lot of radio airplay and reached the top ten of the pop charts of several countries. Today it's the second-most streamed song by Bowie on Spotify. A key TV moment came on July 6, 1972, when Bowie and the Spiders from Mars appeared on the BBC's *Top of the Pops* show to perform "Starman" as Ziggy. *Ziggy Stardust* is one of the defining records of the emerging glam rock movement. And it seemed that Bowie was clearly the leader of that movement. This was the album that turned Ziggy...uh...I mean BOWIE, into a star. Critics adored it. Eventually selling more than 7.5 million copies, today it's Bowie's second-highest selling album of all time.

While touring to promote the album, Bowie wrote a bunch of new stuff. He and the band came back to England to record the songs in late 1972 and early 1973. This ended up making up what became Bowie's sixth studio album, *Aladdin Sane*. RCA released it on April 13, 1973. The album was another critical and commercial success, featuring THESE four singles. "The Jean Genie" peaked at number two on the UK Singles Chart. "Drive-In Saturday," an ode to 1950s doo-wop, peaked at number three on the same chart. "Time" and "Let's Spend the Night Together," a cover of the Rolling Stones classic tune, both didn't do as well on the radio. However, Bowie did have another big radio hit with, "Sorrow," another cover song originally by the McCoys, released by RCA on September 28, 1973.

By that time, Bowie had retired from being Ziggy Stardust. In fact, back on July 3, 1973, he had announced on stage "not only is it the last show of the tour, but it's the last show that we'll ever do."⁴ What he meant by that, as it turns out, was that it would be the last show Ziggy and the Spiders from Mars would ever do. A documentary later came out that featured clips from that

⁴ <https://www.goldradio.com/artists/david-bowie/ziggy-stardust-death-final-show/>

legendary show. But anyway...yeah...Bowie indeed broke up the Spiders from Mars and moved his family to the United States, eventually settling in Los Angeles. His glam rock era was over.

It was around this time that Bowie began using more dangerous drugs. He had used cannabis and psychedelics before, but now he was on a rotation of using cocaine and amphetamines to give him energy and alcohol and sleeping pills to bring him down.

RCA released Bowie's seventh studio album, *Pin Ups*, on October 19, 1973. *Pin Ups* featured nothing but covers. That said, several music critics have said it's ONE OF THE BEST COVERS ALBUMS OF ALL TIME...no big deal. Meanwhile, by the end of the year, five of Bowie's first six albums were in the top 40 and three in the top 15.⁵ After years in the underground, he had propelled to the mainstream. But now he wanted to do something entirely different. First, he attempted a musical. Then he started writing a TV adaptation of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. While both didn't work out, it did lead to more new music. In early 1974, he headed back to the studio to record new songs...many he recorded by himself...and yes many would make the cut for his eighth studio album, *Diamond Dogs*, released by RCA on May 24, 1974. *Diamond Dogs* was much more raw and experimental than his previous releases. That said, mainly due to the momentum of his popularity at the time, the album did commercially well, spawning three singles: the title track, "1984," and "Rebel Rebel," which was another big radio hit and gave us this brief David Bowie as a pirate era. Reviews of *Diamond Dogs* were more mixed.

Around the time RCA released his first official live album, *David Live*, (what a name of an album THAT is), Bowie decided it was time for his plastic soul era. What was "plastic soul" you ask? Well, "the squashed remains of ethnic music as it survives in the age of Muzak, written and sung by a white limey," of course. That's how he really described it. Now...obviously he was making fun of himself there, but I'd describe it as basically inauthentic soul music. Kind of an oxymoron there. Bowie worked with various funk and soul musicians in Philadelphia. What resulted was his ninth studio album, *Young Americans*, released by RCA on March 7, 1975. *Young Americans* marked another dramatic shift in David Bowie's sound and image. It was groove heavy and filled with his most danceable tunes yet. Many fans were surprised at this change in style. Still, critics generally praised *Young Americans* and it was another commercial success. It was Bowie's first album to reach the top ten on the Billboard 200. It featured two singles: the title track and "Fame," a collaboration with THE John Lennon.

Yep, his plastic soul was catching on. On November 4, 1975, Bowie performed on Soul Train, which was a big deal as he was only the second "white" artist to ever appear on the show. And around this time, he had started trying out a new character: The Thin White Duke. Uhhh yeah. It ended up being arguably his most controversial figure due to him saying apparently pro-fascism statements during interviews. Bowie claimed this was all theatrical and he was just being provocative. Those weren't his actual views. Regardless, a lot of people didn't like it, and Bowie would later blame his cocaine use for causing it.

⁵ Buckley, David (2005) [1999]. *Strange Fascination – David Bowie: The Definitive Story*. London: [Virgin Books](#). ISBN 978-0-7535-1002-5.

On January 23, 1976, RCA released Bowie's tenth studio album, *Station to Station*. Co-produced by the very successful Harry Maslin, the album marked a shift from Bowie's plastic soul to krautrock, an experimental form of rock music associated with West Germany. *Station to Station* was another critical and commercial success, reaching the top five on both the UK and American album charts. Today it's considered one of Bowie's best albums. Featuring just six songs, *Station to Station* featured three singles: "Golden Years," "TVC 15," and "Stay." During the first half of 1976, Bowie toured to support the album, still appearing as The Thin White Duke.

Meanwhile, he had begun acting in Hollywood films. He got his first leading role with *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, playing an alien who came to Earth in search of water for his dying planet. After first coming out on March 18, 1976, the film eventually had a big cult following.

In the summer of 1976, Bowie's addiction to cocaine had gotten pretty bad, and he and his now-friend Iggy Pop, who also was addicted to heavy drugs, both decided they should move far away from California to try to get clean. They ended up in Europe. Bowie moved his family to Switzerland and then spent some time in France. After that, it was to West Berlin to record a bunch of new stuff with Brian Eno. Tony Visconti, who had helped produce MOST of Bowie's previous albums, also followed him to West Berlin.

What resulted was another masterpiece. *Low*, which would be Bowie's eleventh studio album. This album was yet another radical departure from his previous work both sonically and structurally. Bowie had now fully embraced synthesizers...and instrumentals. I mean, you could probably thank Brian Eno for that. Despite this being some of Bowie's most ambitious music yet, RCA was hesitant to release *Low*, fearing it was too experimental. When it did finally release it on January 14, 1977, it didn't promote it much. And despite some critics initially just not getting into *Low*, it'd be another commercial success for Bowie, featuring two hits: "Sound and Vision" and "Be My Wife." Today *Low* is also considered to be one of Bowie's best albums.

Low was the first of three groundbreaking albums in a row by Bowie nicknamed "The Berlin Trilogy," as they were all mostly recorded in West Berlin and more ambient and heavily textured due to Brian Eno's influence. The second Berlin Trilogy album was "*Heroes*," Bowie's twelfth studio album, released by RCA on October 14, 1977. The legendary guitarist Robert Fripp of King Crimson joined him for this one. "*Heroes*" was the most critically praised of the Berlin Trilogy. The title track, though initially only a minor hit, ended up being one of Bowie's most recognized songs. Bowie went on a world tour to promote "*Heroes*," playing in Australia for the first time. Despite giving a ton of interviews during this time, he notably abandoned playing characters- he was no longer The Thin White Duke...he was just David Bowie. The third Berlin Trilogy album was *Lodger*, Bowie's thirteenth studio album, released by RCA on May 25, 1979. Though often considered the weakest of the trilogy, today *Lodger* is often considered one of Bowie's most underrated albums. It featured four singles: "Boys Keep Swinging," "D.J.," "Yassassin," and "Look Back in Anger." On December 15, 1979, Bowie made his first appearance on Saturday Night Live.

Meanwhile, Bowie had kept on acting, starring in a West German film called *Just a Gigolo*. 1980 was another transformational year for Bowie. He decided to stop being so experimental and once again embrace pop music, returning to both England and the United States to record new stuff with Visconti. It would be their last collaboration for 20 years. What resulted was Bowie's fourteenth studio album, *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*, released by RCA on September 12, 1980. It'd be his most successful album since *Young Americans*, and got to the top of the UK Albums Chart. It featured four singles: "Ashes to Ashes," "Fashion," "Up the Hill Backwards," and the title track. 1980 also marked Bowie's debut on Broadway. He portrayed a disfigured man in a play called "The Elephant Man." Critics and audiences generally loved Bowie's performance, but the role was physically and emotionally draining for him. Speaking of physically and emotionally draining, 1980 also was when his half-brother Terry killed himself and he and Angela got divorced. Bowie got full custody of their son. On December 8, 1980, an insane fan murdered John Lennon outside of his apartment building in New York City. Apparently the murderer had also planned on murdering Bowie. Crazy enough, Lennon's death may have saved Bowie's life. Obviously this had a profound effect on him, especially since Lennon was a friend. That all aside, Bowie was just burnt out. He canceled an upcoming tour and decided to take a break from performing. He and his son moved back to Switzerland and for the next two years, Bowie became a bit of a recluse.

Still, he continued to write, record, and act, playing lead roles in the BBC adaptation of *Baal* and in the movies *The Hunger* and *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*, both which came out in 1983. But before that, a MASSIVE hit collaboration with the band Queen. They paired to record "Under Pressure." Despite it being Bowie's third number one hit in the UK, this seemed to be the song more than any other that made David Bowie a household name.

Based on this new momentum, in late 1982 Bowie returned to New York City to record new songs. Now with a new record label, EMI America, Bowie intentionally wanted to make a new wave album with mainstream appeal. He worked with the guitarist Nile Rodgers and his band Chic, as well as a little known blues guitarist named Stevie Ray Vaughn. For the first time, Bowie only sang and didn't play any instruments. EMI America released his fifteenth studio album, *Let's Dance*, on April 14, 1983. Mainstream appeal, indeed. *Let's Dance* was Bowie's most commercially successful album by FAR. It remains his best-selling album, eventually selling more than 10.7 million copies worldwide. Though critics were more mixed about it, the album had three massive hits: the title track, "Modern Love," and "China Girl," which was a cover originally by his friend Iggy Pop. "Let's Dance" topped many pop charts around the world, and the music video for the song, as well as the one for "China Girl," made Bowie a mainstay on MTV, even if when he went on MTV he talked trash about them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZGiVzlr8Qg>

With *Let's Dance*, David Bowie had arguably reached the peak of his popularity. He returned to touring for the first time in five years, playing his longest and most well attended tour yet. After the tour ended, Bowie took a break before returning to the studio in the fall of 1984, recording with Iggy Pop. He remained determined to record more pop songs, this time, though, influenced

more by reggae, as demonstrated in the song he did with Tina Turner called "Tonight." EMI America released the ALBUM *Tonight*, Bowie's sixteenth studio album, on September 24, 1984, and it was another commercial success. In addition to the title track, it featured two other singles: "Blue Jean" and "Loving the Alien." Critics, though, mostly trashed it. Bowie himself was not particularly impressed with how *Tonight* turned out. Keep in mind that this was the first time in his career that many critics were talking trash about his music all at the same time.

Around that time, Jim and Brian Henson met with Bowie to see if he could play Jareth the Goblin King in the upcoming film *Labyrinth*, a dark and surreal fairytale basically. Bowie was intrigued, agreed to the role, and also agreed to record some songs for the soundtrack. Though initially a flop, *Labyrinth* became another cult classic. Out of all of Bowie's films, it arguably had the longest-lasting cultural impact.

In the fall of 1986, Bowie recorded some new songs reunited with his childhood pal, Peter Frampton, who by now was also a rock star. Here is a lovely video of the two around that time looking for a beer in Madrid. Anyway, the new songs made up what became Bowie's seventeenth studio album, *Never Let Me Down*, released by EMI America on April 21, 1987. Though the album also did commercially well, critics also generally talked trash about it. Still, *Never Let Me Down* featured three singles: "Day-In Day-Out," "Time Will Crawl," and the title track. Bowie went on another hugely successful worldwide tour to promote the album, and Frampton even joined him on stage for it on lead guitar. Pretty cool.

By 1988, Bowie had grown frustrated with himself not being as creative as he once was. And so...he started a hard rock band. He began jamming with some Americans...guitarist Reeves Gabrels, bassist Tony Fox Sales, and Tony's brother, the drummer Hunt Sales. Together they formed Tin Machine. After spending most of the 1980s as a mainstream pop star, Bowie used Tin Machine to reboot himself. They recorded two albums that did moderately well.

In 1990, Bowie got set up on a blind date with Iman Mohamed Abdulmajid. Well this was one of those blind dates that worked out, because they'd get married two years later and they'd stay together for the rest of his life.

Also in 1990, withOUT Tin Machine, Bowie went on a greatest hits tour. He played 108 shows in 27 different countries and five continents. Perhaps this experience made him miss doing solo stuff.

Regardless, in 1992, Bowie broke up Tin Machine and returned to various studios to record a new solo album, returning to work with Nile Rodgers. This marked the beginning of his electronic music period, you could say. He embraced drum machines and loops. The lyrics were more personal. What resulted was his eighteenth studio album, *Black Tie White Noise*, released this time by Arista Records in the UK and Savage Records in the United States on April 5, 1993. Despite getting mixed reviews, the album had three radio hits in the UK: "Jump They Say," "Miracle Goodnight," and the title track. Instead of touring, Bowie released a film, also called *Black Tie White Noise*, to go with the album.

In the summer of 1993, Bowie recorded the soundtrack for *The Buddha of Suburbia*, a BBC show, but the show only ended up playing the title track so he decided to release the rest of it as his nineteenth studio album. Arista released it on November 8, 1993. Despite having some fans today, the album was Bowie's biggest flop since *Hunky Dory*.

In 1994, inspired by the show *Twin Peaks*, Bowie decided to record another concept album following another murder mystery but centered on the fictional town of Oxford Town, New Jersey. He even wrote a short story to go with the album. Brian Eno returned to produce it with him. What resulted was *Outside*, Bowie's twentieth studio album, released by four different record labels on September 25, 1995. Critics were mixed, but it did get up to number eight in the UK and number 21 in the United States. *Outside* also had two minor radio hits: "Strangers When We Meet" and "Hallo Spaceboy," which the Pet Shop Boys remixed for the album.

By this time, Bowie was already a legend. His popularity had only steadily increased throughout his career, mostly since each younger generation also fell in love with his music. And he began hanging out and performing shows with much younger bands. For example, Nine Inch Nails toured with him for his *Outside* Tour.

In 1996, Bowie reunited with Reeves Gabrels to continue his drum and bass obsession and recorded what would become his twenty-first studio album, *Earthling*, released by these labels on February 3, 1997. Critics were once again mixed about it. The single "I'm Afraid of Americans" did particularly well on alternative rock radio stations. That one was remixed by the aforementioned Nine Inch Nails. *Earthling* featured two other minor radio hits: "Little Wonder" and "Dead Man Walking." *Earthling* also notably featured "Telling Lies," the first-ever downloadable single by a major artist.⁶ Woah, downloading a song onto a computer? What a concept! After the tour promoting *Earthling* wrapped up, Bowie took a bit of a break before recording the soundtrack for a video game in which he and his wife, Iman, recorded voices for, called *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*.

Around that time, Bowie also recorded his twenty-second studio album, *Hours*. Originally released directly by Bowie himself through his website on September 21, 1999, which was a big deal at the time, Virgin Records released the physical version a few days later. *Hours* had three minor radio hits: "Thursday's Child," "Survive," and "Seven." The album marked another big shift in Bowie's sound. *Hours* was much softer and sounded much more like his earlier stuff- like his stuff from the late 1960s and early 1970s. And thus marked his neoclassicist era- a period in which he stopped trying to sound like someone else and instead tried to sound like himself in the past. This era continued with his twenty-third studio album, *Heathen*, released by ISO and Columbia Records on June 10, 2002. Critics generally praised *Heathen*. That's right, the critics were back, baby, and maybe because of that Visconti magic. He had returned to help Bowie produce the album. Still, though, *Heathen* struggled to find commercial success, spawning just

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<https://cybercultural.com/p/online-music-distribution-1996/#:~:text=The%20first%20test%20of%20this,to%20try%20and%20minimise%20buffering.>

two minor radio hits: "Slow Burn" and "Everyone Says 'Hi.'" Feeling artistically rejuvenated, Bowie quickly returned to the studio with Visconti to record a follow-up. That follow-up? Bowie's twenty-fourth studio album, *Reality*, released by ISO and Columbia on September 15, 2003. Critics also generally praised the album. It featured the single "New Killer Star," which is a darn good song in my opinion...but uh...yeah...*Reality* was another commercial flop.

As he had done with the previous two albums, Bowie had gone on worldwide tours to promote the new material. The Reality Tour was notable because he played a bunch of old favorites at shows, some of which he hadn't played in DECADES. It was also his longest and most ambitious tour ever, with more than 110 shows in 28 different countries. It would have been longer, but on June 25, 2004, he had a heart attack WHILE ON STAGE at the Hurricane Festival in Germany. Of course, at the time, he didn't know he was having a heart attack while performing, and even finished the show despite the discomfort. Afterward he was rushed to a hospital for emergency surgery. While he did eventually slowly recover, he had to cancel the remaining 14 shows of the tour. And although he played a few songs live here and there after this, he would never tour again.

Over the next eight years, he'd rarely even make public appearances. On February 8, 2006, he didn't even show up to receive his Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Sure, he sent minor contributions to artists here and there, but often he turned invitations down, and rumors swirled that he must have still been in poor health.

But music was still on his mind. Throughout 2011 and 2012, he secretly recorded new material, again working with Tony Visconti and a bunch of younger guest musicians. And then, seemingly out of nowhere, ISO and Columbia released his twenty-fifth studio album, *The Next Day*, on January 8, 2013. His 66th birthday. It caught almost everybody by surprise. Many critics said *The Next Day* was Bowie's best album in decades and today is considered among his best. It was also a commercial success, topping the UK Albums Chart and getting up to number two on the Billboard 200. *The Next Day* featured Bowie's first UK top 10 single in more than twenty years, "Where Are We Now?" The music video for the title track was controversial as it poked fun at the Catholic Church. YouTube even temporarily banned it.

In the summer of 2014, Bowie became diagnosed with stage four liver cancer, but he kept this private. He approached Visconti soon after this saying he'd like to record one final album, a swan song, or "parting gift" for all his fans before he died. Visconti was one of the few people Bowie actually told about the cancer diagnosis. The two once again recorded in secret, but again bringing many guest musicians. The folks he collaborated with during the recording? They had no idea he was terminally ill. Though in tremendous pain, Bowie remained determined to finish the record. What resulted was his final album, *Blackstar*, released by ISO, Columbia, and Sony Records on January 8, 2016, his 69th birthday. *Blackstar* was a critical and commercial success, becoming his only album to top the Billboard 200 and one of his highest-selling albums of all time.

Just two days after *Blackstar*'s release, Bowie died at his home in New York City. Because he kept his illness private, news of his death shocked fans around the world.

Throughout his career, David Bowie released 26 studio albums, nine live albums, two soundtracks, 26 compilation albums, eight EPs, 128 singles, and six box sets. Holy crap. He has sold more than 100 million records worldwide.

And all this despite being...well...weird, man. David Bowie was one of the weirdest pop stars in history. He was so weird that he was pretty dang far ahead of his time. Throughout his career, he won six Grammy Awards, but of those only one of those was when he was alive. All this brings me to my final point...

You know how earlier in this video I said that Bowie had reached the peak of his popularity with the release of *Let's Dance*? Well, the more I think about it, I don't think he has reached his peak in popularity yet. The world STILL isn't completely ready for him.

David Bowie redefined what it meant to be an artist. He showed the world that change was the point of art, and that change should constantly be embraced. He was constantly reinventing himself...constantly experimenting and innovating. He helped make it cool to be a misfit. A queer symbol, who boldly spoke up for marginalized people in society when most other artists were too afraid to. He reminded us that identity is fluid, expression is freedom, and all of us can be heroes, even if it's just for one day.

So what's your favorite David Bowie song? Album? Era? Character? Let me know down below. I think his most underrated album is *Reality*...not that you cared...but maybe you did? Also let me know which artist you'd like for me to cover next. And a shout out to my friend Shawn Wilson. He was the one who first got me into Bowie back in high school. Thanks for watching.

Sources/further reading:

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