**David Bowie**

David Robert Jones was born in Brixton on January 8, 1947. At age 13, 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 worlds 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 and 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  #5 in the UK). Amidst his musical wanderings in the late '60s, the young Bowie experimented with mixed media, cinema, mime, Tibetan Buddhism, acting and love. A first rock album, originally titled David Bowie then subsequently re-titled Man of Words, Man of Music and again as Space Oddity, paid homage to the kaleidoscopic influences of the London artistic scene, while hinting at a songwriting talent that was about to yield some of rock n roll’s finest and most distinctive work--even if it would take the rest of the world a few years to catch up.

**Early 70s**

The Man Who Sold The World was the first David Bowie album recorded as an entity unto itself and marks ground zero of the first definitive creative stretch to come. 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 by the instant classic The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars—a record without which any Greatest Albums of All Time list is simply incomplete.

1972 would be the year that Bowie ascended to international superstardom. GQ UK editor Dylan Jones, for example, said of the landmark 1972 Top of The Pops appearance on 6th July where Ziggy first materialized in millions of unsuspecting living rooms performing Starman, the album’s lead single,  “This is the performance that turned Bowie into a star, embedding his Ziggy Stardust persona into the nation’s consciousness.” Previewed in London that spring, Bowie’s extraterrestrial rockstar creation Ziggy Stardust staged one of the most spectacular and innovative live shows to date, expanding the parameters of the live rock show and singlehandedly launching a worldwide glam explosion.

The glare of the international spotlight did not distract from Bowie’s fierce and prolific creative focus. The summer of 1972 saw him serve as producer on two classic albums: Lou Reed's Transformer – a landmark record in New York City’s musical history that spawned the surprise leftfield hit, Walk on the Wild Side—and the terrifying and vastly influential proto-punk glam fusion of Raw Power by Iggy & The Stooges (Bowie later went on to produce Iggy’s The Idiot and Lust for Life, the former featuring China Girl, which he and Pop co-wrote and would later (re)appear on Let’s Dance). As if his 1972 weren’t full enough, Bowie also produced Mott the Hoople’s All The Young Dudes, for which he wrote the hit title track.

The US Ziggy tour began in September ‘72, with sold-out shows full of stunning costumes taking inspiration from Japanese theater to interstellar sci-fi, snarling guitars courtesy of Mick Ronson, and a bold, daring approach to performance that propelled the audience into a rock n roll fervor for their otherworldly messiah. By spring of 1973, Ziggy had circled the world, hordes of kids from London to Japan shearing their hair into rooster cuts and clomping to Suffragette City in their new platform heels. Bowie just as abruptly laid Ziggy and the Spiders to rest on June 3, 1973, introducing Rock n Roll Suicide 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 throes of Ziggy fever, Aladdin Sane was released in April 1973, inspired by Bowie's experiences in America while touring and featuring The Jean Genie, Panic in Detroit, Drive-In Saturday, Cracked Actor and of course its namesake track with its frenetic Mike Garson piano solo. After putting the Stardust show to bed, he travelled to France to begin work on his next albums. Released in October 1973, Pin-Ups, an all-covers tribute to the artists that he admired in the London years of 1964-67, was the last time that Bowie would record an album with Mick Ronson on guitar and Ken Scott at the production helm. In May of 1974, Bowie’s next phase of all-original work was unleashed in the form of the dystopian epic Diamond Dogs. Rife with tension and foreboding—punctuated by the raucous title track, the ominous 1984 and perennial glam anthem Rebel Rebel—Diamond Dogs’ conceptual sprawl unfolded in vivid contrast to the disco music that was beginning to crowd the airwaves. In the summer of 1974, he undertook his most ambitious US tour yet, with an enormous set and choreographed tableaus. The double album David Live was recorded at Philadelphia’s Tower Theatre, and serves as a souvenir of these performances.

**Mid 70s**

If those two previous albums showed hints of Bowie's interest in the music he'd heard in America, U.S. soul filtered through a unique UK—truly a uniquely Bowie--perspective soon became more than a homage. In 1975, Bowie made this fascination manifest as Young Americans. The rhythmic, soul-laden tour de force yielded the titular smash single as well as Bowie’s first ever U.S. #1 single, Fame—a collaboration with John Lennon resulting from an impromptu session at Electric Lady in New York and added to the LP at the last possible minute. Young Americans also featured another David discovery soon to be known the world over as R&B icon Luther Vandross. A back-up singer on Bowie's live shows, Vandross was enlisted to contribute vocals on the album alongside the other legendary young American musicians such as Willie Weeks, Andy Newmark, David Sanborn and Mike Garson.

Not long after Young Americans’ release, Bowie moved to Los Angeles and starred in the cult classic Nic Roeg science fiction film The Man Who Fell To Earth. Almost immediately upon completion of filming, he returned to the studio for the recording of Station to Station, a travelogue of sorts featuring the 10+ minute opener/title track, Golden Years, Stay and the prescient tale of a holographic TV swallowing the narrator’s girlfriend, TVC15. The White Light tour followed, with Bowie bringing to life the persona of the Thin White Duke from the album’s lyrics and eschewing the technicolor theatricality of his previous tours in favor of a stark German expressionist black and white film atmosphere that only heightened the dramatic impact of each and every performance. This period also saw RCA's release of David’s first compilation of hits, ChangesOneBowie, 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 is hard to assess, but either way the seismic plates of history were shifting under Berlin’s Hansa Studio by the Wall during Bowie’s 1976 sessions there. 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 atmospheric counterpoint to the emerging punk scene in London. David made a suitably mysterious return to the UK stage playing keyboards with Iggy in 1977, the bare bones production highlighting his unseen, all pervasive influence and fitting the mood of the times perfectly. It wasn’t long, however, before Bowie was to step back out of the shadows once again.

Co-produced by Bowie and Tony Visconti in collaboration with Brian Eno, Low emerged in 1977. The first installment of the famed Berlin Trilogy, Low confounded critics and fans at first, sounding completely unlike anything in the previous Bowie canon—or anything else really. Side one consisted of seven razor edge concise future-pop numbers bookended by two instrumentals, album opener Speed of Life and side one closer A New Career in a New Town. Side two was comprised of four hypnotic ambient pieces, beginning with the 6+ minute Bowie/Eno composition Warszawa. 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 Low's incorporation of these techniques into previously uncharted musical territory is now recognized as the beginning of yet another creative peak for Bowie—and one that has yielded a pair of beloved singles as well, namely Sound and Vision and Be My Wife.

The second in this triptych, “Heroes” prominently features Robert Fripp on guitar, and a more optimistic outlook overall—evident immediately from the opening build and release of first track Beauty and the Beast, the equally rocking Joe The Lion and Blackout, and the dark alluring postpunk ballad Sons of the Silent Age. The title track is one of Bowie's greatest singles and arguably one of the all-time classic musical love stories, recounting a forbidden liaison between lovers near the Berlin Wall over 6+ minutes of sheer motorik beauty and Fripp’s plaintive and hypnotic guitar signature. As with Low, side two of “Heroes” is dominated by mostly instrumental material, yet even that five-song suite featured the major chords of V-2 Schneider as contrast to the somber Sense of Doubt. “Heroes” ended on an upbeat note with The Secret Life of Arabia, one that would foreshadow Bowie’s next cultural infatuation.

Bowie's next foray into film was Just A Gigolo, which he describes as “all my 32 Elvis Presley movies rolled into one.” March of 1978 found him on tour again for the first time since the Station To Station outing. Stage was released in September 1978, culled from that tour’s swing through the United States, and featuring live interpretations of songs from the Berlin period alongside staples from Ziggy Stardust, Young Americans and Station to Station. During a May break from the tour, Bowie 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). A relocation to Switzerland was to follow, abandoned frequently due to a developing love affair with Indonesia, Africa and the Far East.

The aptly named Lodger was released in May 1979, completing the Berlin Trilogy with a sonic and lyrical wanderlust that reached further outward than the Cold War Europe of its predecessors. The last of Bowie’s 1970s collaborative works with Eno, Lodger was Bowie’s first album to feature Adrian Belew on lead guitar across a globetrotting side one opening with Fantastic Voyage’s seductive contemplations of potential nuclear apocalypse and closing with Red Sails, a far eastern take on the hypnotic rhythmic pulse of Krautrock. Side two featured classics DJ, Look Back in Anger and the anthemic Boys Keep Swinging, whose chaotic future calm groove was enhanced by switching guitarist Carlos Alomar to drums and drummer Dennis Davis to bass.

There would be no tour in support of Lodger, though a surprise three-song Saturday Night Live appearance that December stands as one of the most unique and indelible of its kind to this day. Flanked by NYC avant gardists Klaus Nomi and Joey Arias, Bowie performed The Man Who Sold The World rendered immobile in a plastic tuxedo planted in a giant flower pot, TVC15 in a skirt and heels, and Boys Keep Swinging as a floating head green screened onto a (possibly anatomically correct?) puppet. By the time 1979 was winding down, Bowie was again in the studio. Rehearsals also began for his Broadway debut, in the part of The Elephant Man, which opened in September 1980 to rave reviews.

**The 80s**

Scary Monsters… and Super Creeps was released that same September. Produced by Bowie and Visconti, David’s first album of the new decade was preceded by his first UK #1 single, Ashes to Ashes, which resurrected and ruminated on the fate of the Major Tom character from Space Oddity. Scary Monsters…  produced more than one of the iconic clips of the impending first decade of MTV as Ashes to Ashes was followed onto the airwaves by Fashion. Further singles included the title cut and Up The Hill Backwards, establishing Scary Monsters… as a milestone balancing act of artistic ambition and commercial success—one that showcased the return of Fripp on guitar, guest turns including Pete Townshend and the last appearance of the 1976-1980 Bowie rhythm section of Alomar, Davis and bassist George Murray.

As with Lodger, Bowie did not tour behind Scary Monsters… . The relative quiet of his 1981 was punctuated by the October release of Under Pressure, a surprise global smash written and recorded with Queen in Switzerland and ultimately included on Queen's Hot Space album the following year. The song would become Bowie’s second #1 single in the UK, hitting the top spot in three countries total and cracking the top 10 in nine more.

1982 saw Bowie turning his focus to various film projects: playing the male lead in The Hunger, the role of Celliers in in the acclaimed WW2 drama Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence, and writing the theme song for Paul Schrader's Cat People. Another greatest hits compilation, ChangesTwoBowie, was released during this year.

Let’s Dance shattered the silence in April 1983. Bowie's first release for EMI, Let’s Dance would in short order become the most commercially successful album of his career—selling some 7 million copies worldwide as its title track went to #1 in more than half a dozen countries, followed by two more global top 10 hits with Modern Love and the Bowie version of China Girl, co-composed with Iggy Pop, whose version was originally released on 1977’s The Idiot. Produced by Nile Rodgers and featuring the late Stevie Ray Vaughan on guitar atop rhythms provided by the likes of Bernard Edwards, Omar Hakim and Tony Thompson, Let’s Dance was much more than a global hit—the repercussions of its melding of rich fluid blues/rock guitar, rock solid funk grooves and irresistible vocal hooks were instantly evident on the likes of Duran Duran, and are still being felt as recently as the new millennial proliferation of acts like The Killers, Franz Ferdinand and LCD Soundsystem.

The release of Let’s Dance was followed a month later by Bowie’s triumphant return to the stage with the Serious Moonlight tour. Serious Moonlight exceeded all expectations and established Bowie as a global stadium headliner. Every date sold out, including multiple-night stands at the likes of New York’s Madison Square Garden and the UK’s Milton Keynes Bowl, with single engagements moving in excess of 50, 80 even 100,000 tickets at stadiums and fairgrounds in the U.S., Europe, New Zealand and beyond. By the time the tour wound down in Hong Kong that December, Serious Moonlight had sold over 2.5 million tickets across 15 countries. A few months before that tour finale', RCA released Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture Album that October, capturing the energy of Ziggy and the Spiders during their last show. Shortly thereafter, the movie, originally filmed in 1973, was also released.

The upbeat romanticism introduced on Let’s Dance extended to Tonight (1984), though the single Loving the Alien seems eerily prophetic in retrospect, given the coming escalation of Islamic/Christian tensions. That same year, Bowie was one of the first recipients of MTV’s Video Vanguard honor. In 1985, a moving appearance at Live Aid (where he dedicated “Heroes” to his young son), a duet single with Mick Jagger, a third consecutive hit album in Never Let Me Down (1987) and the accompanying Glass Spider tour (with lead guitar by Peter Frampton) all maintained the momentum of the Bowie juggernaut.

In 1988, however, in a thoroughly unexpected left turn, Bowie abruptly switched off the solo star spotlight with the formation of his new band, Tin Machine. Having enlisted the Sales Brothers (Hunt and Tony, sons of Soupy and veteran rhythm section of Todd Rundgren’s Runt as well as Iggy Pop’s Lust For Life, to name but a few) and guitar innovator Reeves Gabrels, Bowie was adamant that Tin Machine 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-centric sound, all-new material and a few real surprises (a Pixies cover!). Some fans loved it, others were confused, but the arguments were quickly rendered moot as Bowie put Tin Machine on hiatus not long after its 1991 sophomore LP.

**The 90s**

Bowie opened the next decade with 1990’s Sound + Vision tour. Featuring a tight focused four-piece band with Adrian Belew on lead guitar and with Edouard Lock of La La La Human Steps providing art direction, Sound + Vision was conceived as a fitting goodbye to Bowie’s greatest hits, some of which would be played live for the final time on this tour. Sound + Vision ultimately exceeded the reach of both Serious Moonlight and Glass Spider, playing 108 shows and visiting 27 countries. In a move presaging the modern day crowdsourcing of setlists, fans were encouraged to vote for the songs they wanted to hear by calling in to 1-800-2-BOWIE-90. A compilation of the same name accompanied the tour, released in lavish deluxe editions by Rykodisc.

1993 brought the long-awaited return of David Bowie, solo artist, with Black Tie White Noise and one of rock’s first CD–ROMs entitled Jump. With Nile Rodgers again producing, the album provided sonic updates to several previous Bowie eras: with the opening instrumental The Wedding (inspired by Bowie’s 1992 marriage to Iman Abdulmajid) offering a dance-and-house-inspired tone recalling Low’s brighter moments; the single Jump They Say harking back to funkier times, and a cover of Cream's I Feel Free marking a long-awaited reunion with Ziggy-era partner Mick Ronson (sadly, Ronson passed away soon after). Reaching #1 in the UK album charts, Black Tie White Noise reassured fans that Bowie's creative curiosity was insatiable as ever.

By 1994, Bowie and Eno were again collaborating in the studio. The result was the concept album Outside, released in 1995 as the first installment of a new deal with Virgin Records. The complex project explored the increasing obsession with the mutilation of the human body as art and the paganization of western society. With cut and paste lyrics drawing from the diary of fictional character Nathan Adler, a haunted sound of ruin soundtracking a non-linear storyline of art, murder and technology, Outside predated a new darker sensibility that would pervade not only music, but film, literature and the arts in general in the very near future. Appropriately, the album’s first single The Hearts Filthy Lesson, showed up in the soundtrack of one of the darkest films to cross over into the mainstream of that year in David Fincher’s Seven—while two years later edits of deep cut I’m Deranged would bookend David Lynch’s Lost Highway as both opening title and end credits music.

The Outside tour actually began a few weeks before the album’s release, exacerbating the already confrontational scenario of playing with Nine Inch Nails: In addition to avoiding the monster hits that had been laid to rest five years earlier on Sound + Vision, the first few weeks saw Bowie and band playing sets dominated by an as yet unreleased album. Hardly unusual for Bowie, the tour is regarded in hindsight as bold and unprecedented, from the overlapping transition that meshed NIN and Bowie’s performances to its unearthed treasures including Joe The Lion from “Heroes” and a radically rearranged The Man Who Sold The World. Following an Outside summer 1996 tour of Japan, the UK and Europe, an intensity of a different sort was introduced into the mix with a pair of stunning acoustic performances at the 1996 Bridge Benefit Concert in San Francisco. That same summer of 1996, Julian Schnabel’s biopic Basquiat, co-starring Gary Oldman, Christopher Walken and Dennis Hopper, saw Bowie playing the character immortalized in his 1972 song, Andy Warhol.

On September 11, 1996, a brand new Bowie track, Telling Lies, would become the first ever song to be offered for download via the internet. Despite the crawling speed rates of the nascent online era, Telling Lies was downloaded by more than 300,000 fans prior to being released as a single that fall, and eventually showing up on Bowie’s next album, Earthling, early in 1997.

The next preview of Earthling material came with the VH1 Fashion Awards on October 25, where Bowie debuted Little Wonder, the upcoming album’s opening track.  Little Wonder was also performed alongside nearly every song from the as-yet-unreleased Earthling at David's January 1997 all-star 50th birthday concert at New York’s Madison Square Garden. Over the course of the evening, Bowie would be joined on new material, classics and covers alike by special guests and dear friends such as the late legendary Lou Reed, Frank Black of the Pixies, Dave Grohl (on drums as well as guitar with the Foo Fighters), Sonic Youth, Robert Smith of The Cure, and Billy Corgan. All told, it was not only one of David’s most memorable shows but one of the most unforgettable evenings of music in MSG history.

Earthling dropped in February 1997, its striking cover art featuring Bowie in an Alexander McQueen designed Union Jack coat surreally (mis?)placed in a British pastoral setting—a fitting visual expression of the album’s jarring juxtaposition of classic Bowie melodies with post apocalyptic industrial and drum and bass textures. His first self-produced album since Diamond Dogs, Earthling featured Bowie's core touring band of Gail Ann Dorsey (bass, vocals), Mike Garson (keyboards), Reeves Gabrels (guitar, synths), and Zachary Alford (drums). Highlights included the stirring and reflective Dead Man Walking and the infectious sardonic humor of I’m Afraid Of Americans, co-written with Eno and accompanied by a spontaneous Dom & Nic video that found Trent Reznor (who plays on the V1 single version of the song) chasing David through the streets of New York’s Greenwich Village. The Earthling world tour followed, spanning from May 1997 through its October/November 1997 South American stadium run.

1998 saw the launch of BowieNet ([www.davidbowie.com](http://www.davidbowie.com/)), the world's first artist-created Internet service provider and a 1999 WIRED Award nominee for Best Entertainment Site of the Year.

In 1999, David somehow found time to play the title role in the film Exhuming Mr. Rice a/k/a Mr. Rice’s Secret, to join a prestigious list including BB King, Dizzy Gillespie and Quincy Jones in receiving an honorary doctorate in music from Boston’s Berklee College of Music, to make a successful foray in the art world with an acclaimed exhibition at London's Cork Street Gallery, and to accept the Legion d’honneur Award in France. 1999 also saw David join Placebo at the annual BRIT Awards for a performance of the T Rex classic Twentieth Century Boy—a performance that went down so well that the UK's Mirror newspaper staged a campaign for the track to be released as a single. That July saw David voted both biggest music star of the 20th century by readers of The Sun newspaper and sixth Greatest Star of The Century by Q Magazine's readers (the Q poll also saw David place as third highest-ranking living star).

Most significantly October 1999 saw the release of one of Bowie’s most fearlessly autobiographical works to date, 'Hours…’. Written solely with long-time collaborator Reeves Gabrels, 'Hours…’ evoked the bare bones aesthetic and raw personal nature of the Hunky Dory era—that brief window between the emergence of Bowie’s singular songwriting voice and the coming creation of the personae through which it would be filtered. On emotionally charged tracks like Thursday’s Child, Survive and The Pretty Things Are Going To Hell, 'Hours…’ employs bold introspection in delivering its deeply personal yet ultimately universal impact. The 'Hours…’ touring regimen ended with a spectacular event that also saw Bowie coming full circle to an earlier career milestone, as he headlined the closing night of the 2000 Glastonbury festival in front of an estimated 150,000 people—a far cry from the few thousand who witnessed his 1971 Glastonbury set.

**2001 and beyond**

The turn of the century found David enjoying a period out of the public eye, emerging only for a handful of rare and meaningful live performances. For two consecutive years, he pledged his support to the Tibet House benefit concerts at New York’s Carnegie Hall alongside luminaries such as Philip Glass, Patti Smith, Ray Davies and Beastie Boy Adam Yauch (RIP) to aid the campaign for a free Tibet. Each year saw a markedly different performance: 2001 featured Moby on guitar for a rocking version of “Heroes” as well as a rare performance of the Buddhism-inspired Silly Boy Blues, while 2002 saw a unique arrangement of Space Oddity featuring the Kronos Quartet along with Yauch on bass.

A life altering event took place shortly after with the birth of David and Iman’s first child, Alexandria Zahra Jones. Bowie took this time to enjoy fatherhood but also began writing a series of new songs which would form the basis for a new album.

David was in New York on September 11th, 2001 and in the aftermath showed his 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 one-man rendition of the Simon and Garfunkel classic America and followed with an uplifting rendition of his own “Heroes”. All in attendance and the millions watching the live TV broadcast were moved by the sentiments expressed in both passionate performances.

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. As the material took shape, so did a change of outlook towards the music industry and the setting up of Bowie's Iso Records label, which would link up with Columbia Records to plan the release of this most eagerly awaited new album. Bowie soon embarked on a scouting trip with Visconti and wound up so taken with a new studio in upstate New York called Allaire that he didn’t return home until the record was complete. Living on the grounds with his family, he put his habit of early rising to good use as the album came increasingly and sharply into focus.

Heathen was released in June 2002, preceded by first single Slow Burn featuring old friend Pete Townshend on lead guitar. Dave Grohl took the same role on the Neil Young cover I’ve Been Waiting For You. Guest turns aside though, Bowie played more instruments on Heathen than anything in memory, including the drums over his own loop on the Pixies cover Cactus, as well as nearly all the synth work and some of the piano. As for the album title, “Heathenism is a state of mind”, Bowie explained at the time. “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.” Heathen’s release 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. Produced once again by Bowie and Visconti and opening with a 1-2 punch of the oblique yet undeniable New Killer Star and a cover of the Modern Lovers’ Pablo Picasso, Reality rang direct and uncompromising both musically and philosophically. The album boldly questioned the existence of rational underpinnings of modern society, moreover the very nature of knowledge itself in the 21st century. The chords that it struck elicited positive reviews everywhere from the BBC to Pitchfork, the latter positing that Reality “should cement his continued role as vibrant, modern artist for years to come.” The album’s release was followed by the rapturously received and critically acclaimed A Reality Tour of the world, which would end up being Bowie’s last extensive touring outing to date.

David would maintain an extremely low profile for the coming years, popping up for two stunning 2005 performances with Arcade Fire, one at Central Park’s Summerstage and another at that year’s Fashion Rocks fundraiser at New York’s Radio City Music Hall. In 2006 he joined Pink Floyd legend Dave Gilmour to lend his voice to classics from both Syd Barrett (Arnold Layne) and Gilmour (Comfortably Numb) era Pink Floyd classics at a Royal Albert Hall performance. The same year also saw Bowie receive a Lifetime Achievement Grammy, as well as a return to acting with the Chris Nolan-directed box office #1 The Prestige.

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 with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 11th Annual Webby Awards (known as the “Oscars of the Internet”) 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 dedication of a plaque in Heddon Street, London (the scene of the Ziggy Stardust cover shoot) to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the release of The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars--and of course the enduring influence of David Bowie over those 40 years.

In 2013, it was announced that the David Bowie Archive had given unprecedented access to the prestigious Victoria and Albert Museum for ‘David Bowie is….’, an exhibition to be curated solely by the V&A in London. Marking the first time a museum has been given access to the David Bowie Archive, the exhibition has gone on to break records in the U.S., Berlin and France. ‘David Bowie is….’ continue to tour the world for the foreseeable future, with recent stops in Australia, the Netherlands and Bologna and an upcoming January 2017 trip to Japan.

On January 8, 2013 (his 66th birthday), David Bowie suddenly and without fanfare, released a new single entitled Where Are We Now? and announced the release of a new album titled The Next Day. Despite a complete lack of conventional promotion—not a single interview or live performance would take place--Bowie's 27th studio album and first in 10 years hit #1 in the UK and 18 other countries and entered the U.S. chart at a career high #2. Spurred on by uniformly brilliant songs like The Stars (Are Out Tonight), Valentine’s Day and Love Is Lost, critical consensus rated The Next Day the equal of any Bowie classic: The New York Times called it “Bowie’s twilight masterpiece,” while The Independent named it “the greatest comeback album in rock n roll history… as good as anything he’s made.” Bowie would maintain radio silence for the duration of The Next Day’s stay on the charts, with only occasional visual interpretation such as Floria Sigismondi’s takes on The Stars (Are Out Tonight) (starring David and Tilda Swinton as suburban husband and wife) and The Next Day (with Gary Oldman as a debauched bishop and Marion Cotillard as… well… this is what YouTube is for...) puncturing the veil of mystery surrounding the album. The album’s fifth and final single Love Is Lost was released in October 2013. A video for the track—produced on a budget of $12.99 USD (the cost of a flash drive Bowie purchased to store the footage on his camera)—was premiered at that month’s Mercury Prize ceremony, where The Next Day was nominated for Album of the Year. In November 2013, The Next Day Extra deluxe edition was issued, featuring the Love Is Lost (Hello Steve Reich Mix for the DFA) remix by James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem amongst numerous other bonus tracks from The Next Day sessions and a bonus DVD featuring the videos for Where Are We Now?,  The Stars (Are Out Tonight), The Next Day and Valentine’s Day.

In 2014 David Bowie's 50th year in music was commemorated with the release of the compilation Nothing Has Changed, a career-spanning anthology of hits and obscurities. Bowie once again defied convention by opening the 3-CD deluxe edition of Nothing Has Changed with the seven-minute jazz murder ballad Sue (or In A Season Of Crime) featuring the Maria Schneider Orchestra (for which Schneider would win a Grammy for Best Arrangement, Instruments and Vocals in February 2016). Bowie ended that same 50th anniversary year with the low key reveal of the demo track 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore, an uncompromising piece pointing toward a future of even further experimentation.

Spring 2015 brought the announcement of the off Broadway theatre production Lazarus, a collaboration between Bowie and renowned playwright Enda Walsh, directed by Ivo Van Hove. Inspired by the novel The Man Who Fell To Earth by Walter Tevis, Lazarus centered on the character of Thomas Newton, famously portrayed by Bowie in the 1976 screen adaptation. Featuring new Bowie songs alongside fresh arrangements of music from his entire catalogue, Lazarus opened December 7, 2015 to rave reviews--The New York Times raved “Ice-cold bolts of ecstasy shoot like novas through the glamorous muddle and murk of Lazarus, the great-sounding, great-looking and mind-numbing new musical built around songs by David Bowie,” while Rolling Stone hailed Lazarus as a “Surrealistic Tour de Force… milk-swimming, lingerie-sniffing, gin-chugging theater at its finest”--and a completely sold out New York run—the closing date of which, January 20, 2016, was proclaimed David Bowie Day by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. On July 25, 2016, it was announced that Lazarus would open in London at the King’s Cross Theater, to run October 25, 2016 through January 22, 2017.

On October 25, 2015 it was confirmed that ★ (pronounced Blackstar) would be the title of David Bowie’s 28th album, to be released on David’s 69th birthday, January 8, 2016. The album’s titular 10-minute opener was released as a single on November 20, 2015 accompanied by a short film directed by Johan Renck, which received a sold out theatrical premiere at Brooklyn’s Nitehawk Cinema featuring Q&As with Renck and ★ co-producer Tony Visconti. A second single, Lazarus, followed on December 18, 2015, along with another Renck-directed video—preceded by the theatrical interpretation of the song making leap from stage to screen, when Michael C. Hall and the musicians from the play performed Lazarus on the December 17, 2016 episode of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.

Co-produced by Bowie and Visconti and featuring backing from local NYC jazz saxophonist Donny McCaslin and his quartet, ★ was released to overwhelming acclaim, garnering many of the best critical notices of Bowie’s entire career, including:

“His best anti-pop masterpiece since the Seventies… Bowie’s most fulfilling spin away from glam-legend pop charm since 1977’s Low. ★ is that strange and that good."—ROLLING STONE

“Strange, daring, ultimately rewarding... at once emotive and cryptic, structured and spontaneous and, above all, willful, refusing to cater… Each song on ★ is restless and mercurial… He may be briefly dropping his mask; he may be trying on a new one. Either way, he’s not letting himself or his listeners take things easy.”—THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Already one of the best albums of 2016… some of the most forward-thinking music around… the songs on his 28th studio album sound like nothing else in pop music right now… light years ahead of anyone else.”—ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"★ is an unqualified triumph. Texturally adventurous, sonically stunning”—USA TODAY (4 stars)

“With ★, the delicious conceit of David Bowie conspiring with modern jazz artists is fulfilled beautifully… an album to savor as well as admire.”—THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"★ is a distorted mirror that renders daily life odd and the mundane downright nightmarish... These are diabolical earworms, all the more creepy for their singsong lucidity. But hasn’t that always been Bowie’s genius, knowing exactly how much sugar is needed to smuggle in the strange?”—NEW YORK MAGAZINE/VULTURE

"As fierce and unsettling -- and sometimes as beautiful -- as anything in Bowie’s one-of-a-kind catalog... ★ emphasizes a different Bowie attribute: His willingness to pursue an idea well beyond the constraints of verse-chorus-verse.”—THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

★ was the first David Bowie album to hit #1 in the U.S., and topped the charts in more than 20 countries, including the UK, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. ★ closer I Can’t Give Anything Away was released April 6, 2016 as a third single. An animated interpretation of the song by the album’s designer Jonathan Barnbrook--whose relationship with Bowie began with Heathen and would continue through Reality, The Next Day and ★, as well as the graphics for the David Bowie is... exhibition--was unveiled the same day.

On January 10, 2016, David Bowie died peacefully surrounded by his family after a courageous 18-month battle with cancer. His body of work, multi-generational influence and legacy of fearless innovation and endless reinvention will live on forever.

[www.davidbowie.com](http://www.davidbowie.com/)