

DAVID

BOWIE



HOW A DISILLU-
SIONED AND DRUG-AD-
DICTED DAVID BOWIE
REINVENTEDHISMUSICWITH

AN ARTICLE BY THE AUGHTOR

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ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER 1975, DAVID BOWIE WALKED INTO CHEROKEE STUDIOS AT 751 N FAIRFAX AVENUE IN WEST HOLLYWOOD TO BEGIN RECORDING THE SONG THAT IS NOW REGARDED AS ONE OF HIS GREATEST,

Bowie had only recently returned from New Mexico where he had been cast in Nicolas Roeg's cult sci-fi film *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, starring as Thomas Jerome Newton, a humanoid extraterrestrial from a drought-stricken world who crash-lands on Earth.

Bowie's performance as the gentle, vulnerable and emo-

tionally dislocated Newton, who succumbs to earthly vices such as alcohol and television, was acclaimed by critics. Bowie's heavy cocaine use at the time only fuelled his depiction of alienation.

In Nicholas Pegg's book *The Complete David Bowie* (2000), Bowie recalled that his drug-fuelled state enhanced the feeling that he "wasn't

of this Earth" and made the role feel like a "natural performance". So natural, in fact, that by the time Bowie began recording *Station To Station* and the album of the same name, he was arguably still in character.

He was also barely eating. According to writer Emily Barker in a 2018 article in the *NME*, Bowie "starved his body of all

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IN APRIL 1975, AS NOTED BY CAMERON CROWE, BOWIE ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT.



THE RETIREMENT WAS SHORT-LIVED. BY SEPTEMBER, HE WAS LOOKING TOWARDS EUROPE, INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF ARTISTS SUCH AS NEU!, KRAFTWERK, TANGERINE DREAM AND BRIAN

nutrients (besides milk, red peppers, and cocaine)" during the recording.

It was a fragile psychological state. The result was that he had almost no recollection of having recorded the song or the album from which it came. "I have only flashes of making it," Bowie said in David Buckley's 2005 book *Strange Fascination: David Bowie: The Definitive Story*. Despite such issues, or perhaps because of them, the song that emerged was a dazzling, multi-part epic that spanned religious mys-

ticism and the occult, and ushered in Bowie's new persona, the Thin White Duke.

50 years on from its release the song still stands as one of the most thrilling and innovative moments of Bowie's peerless back catalogue. *Station To Station* is a deeply ambitious album, a transitional work which bridges the 'plastic soul' of *Young Americans* (1975) with his Berlin trilogy of albums – *Low* (1977), *Heroes* (1977) and *Lodger* (1979). Clocking in at over ten minutes long, *Station To Station* was also the longest stu-

dio track of Bowie's career.

1975 marked a major transition in Bowie's life. His marriage was falling apart and he was embroiled in a long-running lawsuit to end his management contract with MainMan, the company formed by Tony Defries in 1972.

Bowie was also disillusioned with Los Angeles, where he lived for much of 1975. Three years later, he told Angus McKinnon of the *NME* that the city "should be wiped off the face of the planet".