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Brian Eno Once Composed Music for Windows 95 ; Now He Lets You Create Music with an iPad App

- 6- Webographie -

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Now running through my speakers, even as I write this : Brian Eno's latest album, [Lux](#). The disc offers four pieces of ambient music, a style that, even if Eno didn't technically invent it, he certainly took it to a new level of fascination and popularity. He composed these tracks "if 'composed' is indeed the word" as generative music, a process rather than a style, but one he named and has promoted since the nineties. For a definition of generative music, I turn to Eno's [A Year with Swollen Appendices](#), a book that does not leave my nightstand. "One of my long-term interests has been the invention of 'machines' and 'systems,'" he writes, "to make music with materials and processes I specified, but in combinations and interactions I did not. My first released piece of this kind was [Discreet Music](#) (1975), in which two simple melodic cycles of different durations separately repeat and are allowed to overlay each other arbitrarily." In [Lux](#), we have the latest iteration of that musical model. But even if this new record or its predecessors won't make your playlist, there's at least one Brian Eno composition with which you'll already feel intimately familiar. I refer, of course, to the [Windows 95 startup sound](#). Eno describes the musical challenge as follows : "The thing from the agency said, 'We want a piece of music that is inspiring, universal, blah- blah, da-da-da, optimistic, futuristic, sentimental, emotional,' this whole list of adjectives, and then at the bottom it said 'and it must be three and one quarter seconds long.'"

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From that list of 150 vague words, Eno crafted 84 miniature pieces of music. You may have heard the one Microsoft ultimately went with hundreds, or thousands, of times. Obviously they've sounded the same on every play, and this very fact displeases their creator, especially when he creates with generative systems in the first place. "What I always wanted to do was sell the system itself, so that a listener would know that the music was always unique," Eno continues in *A Year*. "With computer technology I began to think there might be a way of doing it." Computer technology, which has come a long way since the days of Windows 95, has brought us to the release of [Scape, the first generative music iPad app](#) (\$5.99) from Eno and Peter Chilvers. "The idea is that you assemble pieces of music out of sonic building blocks "we call them 'elements' " which then respond intelligently to each other," Eno says in the [introductory video](#) just above. *Scape* follows [Bloom](#) and [Trope](#), the duo's previous generative music apps for the iPhone. Does it strike you as strange that the man behind such an iconic Microsoft theme now releases apps only for Apple devices ? It's no big surprise : Eno even [composed the Windows 95 sound on a Mac](#).

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