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Sometimes it's Sunset, Sometimes it's Sunrise: Inside the Mind of Larry "Wild Man" Fischer



by [Gary Pig Gold](#)

Irwin Chusid (author, *Songs In The Key Of Z*): Outsider music is a slippery genre. It's musicians who tend to be self-taught, untrained, working certainly way outside the channels of mainstream music. There are very important qualifications: They are *sincere* about it. They *mean* it. They're not doing it to be funny. They're not doing it to be outrageous. This is a sincere musical expression. Wild Man Fischer in many ways is a poster child for outsider music.

Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo): At his best, he's mainlined right into this creative kind of subconscious. It's coming from a pure place.

Dennis P. Eichhorn (tour manager; *Real Stuff Comics* creator): I've seen him really work a crowd and have every single one of them responding to him positively. When he's performing and when he's got *the pep*, he's one of the greatest entertainers you'd ever see in your life.

Irwin Chusid: The appeal of Larry's music is that it's *real*. You're hearing something that is the musical vision of one singular human being that really comes from the heart and soul of an *individual*.

Solomon Burke (King of Rock & Soul and Larry's initial mentor): A very, *extremely* talented young man.

Larry: I just think I'm the best rock singer in the world.

David Fischer (Larry's older brother): I still don't think he's a good singer. I might be wrong.

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Larry: You know what happened to my career? *Nothing*. I have *nothing*, you know? Once in a while I go out and sing, but that's very rare. I'm too scared of the music business. And I'm too scared of all the people in it. Is that sad or what?

“Derailroaded”:

I have been derailroaded / Derailroaded by everybody / I have been sent off the track / To wander like a fool / They are liars, and they are thieves / And they left me to stand around / Like a derailroaded fool

Larry: That's what the show-business people are like. They love to torture their entertainers. Those fuckers in show business, you know? They turned me into the psycho I've become.

Billy Mummy (producer, *Pronounced Normal, Nothing Scary*): It's unfortunate that Larry has not had more commercial success with his music. But Larry is a manic-depressive paranoid schizophrenic. And that is an interesting mixture of energy.

Dr. Louis Sass (Professor of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers University): A person with schizophrenia is characterized by delusions. Hallucinations. Usually auditory hallucinations. A lot of it has to do with a feeling of conspiracies being directed at you. Everyone's out to *get* you.

Larry: I'm scared. There's people after me. I don't know who's involved. I just don't know *who's* involved. It's been a nightmare. All kinds of things have happened to me. Things that you would not believe.

“The Wild Man Fischer Story”:

In the year of 1962 / I got thrown out of school / In the year of 1963 / I was committed to a mental institution / In the year of 1964 / I was released from the mental institution / In the year of 1966 / I was committed to the mental institution again

Larry: Well, my life has not been all that pleasant. My father died when I was young and my mother didn't love me, or didn't care about me. She used to make me eat on the sink. They made me stand up and eat on the sink. My mother didn't love me.

Gail Zappa: The thing about Los Angeles – there are a *lot* of freaks here. Freaks are people that have figured out a way to, in spite of society, express themselves. And so Larry is just another one of the freaks.

“Why I Am Normal”:

I would say I'm a normal, everyday person, you know? I like girls. I like to eat at restaurants. I like sports cars. I like motorcycles. I'd like to get married one day, have kids. You know, raise a normal family. My mother always used to, you know, *wonder* about me. She wondered what I was gonna do when I got older. I said Mother, don't *worry* about me. I'll get a job! I'll go straight!

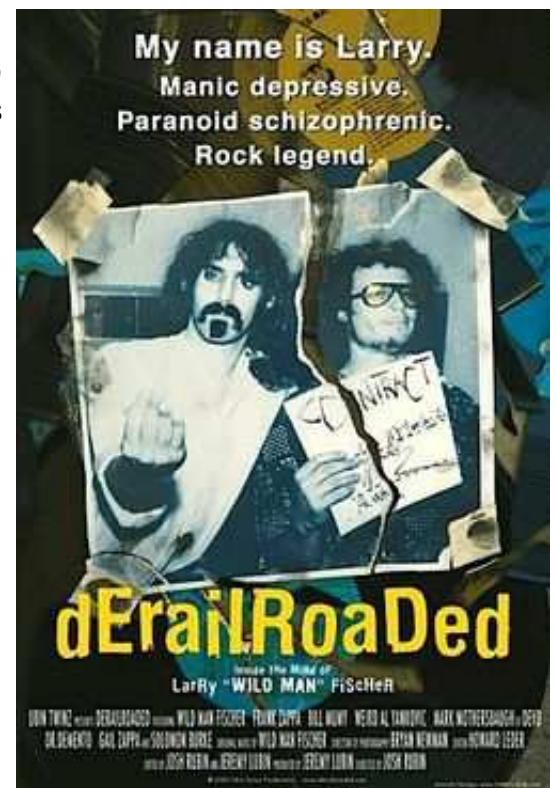
Larry: The first audition I went on was for *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. And I got it.

Dan Rowan (*Laugh-In* episode # 16, 1968): Now that he's been exposed on national TV, don't you think he'll fly to stardom?

Frank Zappa (producer, *An Evening with Wild Man Fischer*): I thought that from the very first day that I met him, somebody should make an album about Wild Man Fischer.

Larry: Frank Zappa told me that he could make me a rock star. And if Frank Zappa told you that, wouldn't you think you might be able to become a rock star?

Frank Zappa: But when you're working with someone like Wild Man Fischer, the problems that arise become too much to bear.



“Do The Wildman”:

There's a new dance goin' round the land / Come on everybody, do the Wild Man / Throw your arms up, pretend you're a child / That's it now, you're getting wild

Frank Zappa: One thing that you must remember about Wild Man Fischer is that he actually is a wild person. And, uh, Larry is dangerous.

Larry: He loved it. He said that if he ever had a son, he wanted his son to be just like me. I swear to God he said that.

Frank Zappa: I spent three months working on the Wild Man Fischer album. And at the end of that time not only was I accused of robbing Wild Man Fischer and cheating Wild Man Fischer and abusing him – most of this from Wild Man Fischer himself – but the album itself did not sell a large amount of copies.

“The Wild Man Fischer Story”:

In the year of 1968 / Have I made a mistake? / Will I end up a bum? / Will I end up a crumb? / Will I end up in hell? / Will I end up in jail? / Will I end up in Jesus? / Will I end up in trees? / Will I end up rich, rich, rich, rich? / Wild Man Fischer / Wild Man Fischer / Merry-go, Merry-go, Merry-go-round / boop boop boop...

Larry: Well, I never became a rock star. Frank Zappa fired me. That's it.

“Frank”:

Frank's got money in the bank / Frank's got women he can spank / Frank owns my publishing rights / You could say he's on my mind / Think about him all the time...

Larry: You got to have three things: You got to have talent. You got to have luck. And you got to have persistence.

Gail Zappa: I never thought that he would have a real career. And I see him now, and he looks like a very, very exhausted version of that person that I knew then. He's almost identical.

* * * * *

Larry: Want to hear how I started a multimillion-dollar empire? “Go To Rhino Records” – you ever heard that song before?

“Go To Rhino Records”:

Go to Rhino Records / On Westwood Boulevard / Go to Rhino Records / On Westwood Boulevard / You can get Herb Alpert / And Jackie Lomax / For 40 cents / Da-doo, Da-doo

Larry: That's the first song that was ever done for Rhino Records. I started a multimillion-dollar company! I became Rhino Records' mascot! Think about it.

“The Bouillabaisse”:

Don't ever forget the money / Don't ever forget the money...

David Fischer: Larry never seemed to have any money, no matter how many albums the guy was doing. It was beyond me. If they do an album on somebody and if it's not successful, why are you doing another? And what was he supposed to get out of it? I mean, he certainly was very upset and bitter about it.

“It's a Money World”:

It's a money world / It's a money world...

Larry: Show business is really hard. You really can't trust that very many people. Rhino Records, and *most* people, have taken advantage of me. Here's a song I wrote about the music business:

“Derailroded”:

Money occupies your mind / Money can buy your songs / Money is all you buy / It's a money world / I wish there was no

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such thing as money

Agreement Dated 12/1/83:

“This is to prove that Larry Fischer received \$750.00, (seven hundred & fifty dollars), as an advance for his album called *Nothing Scary* . (signed) Larry Fischer.”

“Don't Be A Singer”:

All you'll ever meet are cheaters and liars / Liars and thieves / And robbers and swindlers / That's all you'll ever meet, that's all you'll ever see / Don't be a singer

Larry: I don't want to be a rock singer no more. It's a horrifying experience. It's a nightmare. It's not as good as you think it is. People *use* singers.

Larry (letter to Dennis Eichhorn): “Dear Denny, I like you. You are a nice guy. You know, I quit show business. I hate show business. It's full of crooks. And you're one of them. A *nice* crook. Your friend, Larry.”

Mark Mothersbaugh: He'd call me up and go “Mark, I'm quitting show biz. Do you blame me?” I'd go “No, I don't blame you. It's an awful business.” He would quit show business about two or three times a week.

“It's a Hard Business” (recorded with Rosemary Clooney):

Rosemary, I'm thinking of quitting this impossible business / Oh really, Larry? I hope not / It's just too hard / It's a hard business / Please tell me that you agree / It's a hard business / It's hard for you and hard for me / It's a hard business / Reaching way down in your soul / It's a hard business / Singing jazz or rock 'n' roll

* * * * *

Larry: The main reason I got into the music business was to impress my family, earn a living, complete my dream. But I knew I would never be able to tour. I'm too paranoid.

Rudy Ray Moore (The Avenging Disco Godfather): This is the way I would interpretate [sic] that particular phrase of “derailroded”: The railroad carries a train, and the train has come off of the tracks and fell over. And where am I going from here? Sounds like a sad story.

“One Kind of Mind”:

My mind is one of a kind / And if you ever come across a mind like mine / Make sure you dig it, and dig it for gold / Because my mind is one of a kind / Right?

Dr. Louis Sass: I think there are a lot of different reasons why people are drawn to Larry's music. One of them is a little bit like the reason why people a century or two ago would go sometimes to the asylums to look at the patients. It's a kind of voyeurism to stare at this person who seems so weird and so uninhibited. But a second reason, of course, is that we're really moved by what he says and the story that he tells of his life and of his sufferings.

Mark Mothersbaugh: He's a force of nature. He's like a poet. He's a bard in the best of ways, I think. If he grew up in Mongolia, he might have been considered a shaman. And everything that he is and does would be tolerated.

Larry: I guess I'm getting older now. I can't be a musician/singer anymore. I'm too old. I *want* to be a musician/singer. I want to make everybody happy.

“Do You Ever Have a Goal in Life”:

My goal in life was to become a singer / But it didn't come true / I think / I don't know / Who cares? / Bye-bye

* * * * *

Gary Pig Gold: All of the above dialogue and lyric are taken from Josh Rubin's stellar documentary *Derailroded: Inside The Mind of Larry “Wild Man” Fischer*, newly available on DVD from MVD Visual. Even those who, like me, have already experienced *Roky Erickson: You're Gonna Miss Me, I Just Wasn't Made For These Times*, or even *The*

6/17/2011

Sometimes it's Sunset, Sometimes it's ...

Agony and the Ecstasy of Phil Spector will be deeply touched and moved by [Derailroaded](#), and hopefully will take forever as much away from it as I did. Just be prepared.

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