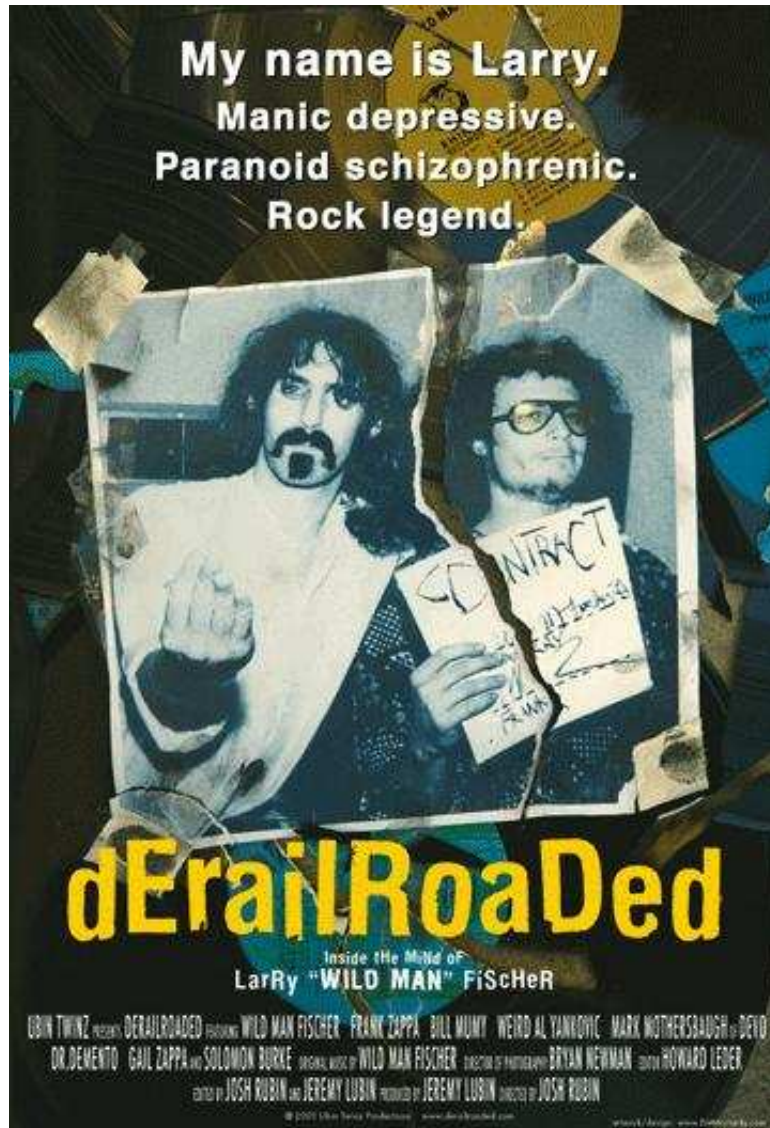


[Derailroaded : Inside The Mind Of Larry "Wild Man" Fischer \(MVD Visual\)](#)

Written by Gaz E

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When the legend of Larry "Wild Man" Fischer was introduced into the lives of filmmakers Josh Rubin and Jeremy Lubin (collectively known as the Ubin Twinz), initially by Howard Stern lackey "Melrose" Larry Green, they must have felt that the gods of underground documentary filmmaking were smiling on them.

With a backstory that, in itself, surely contained more than enough meaty material to fill a feature-length piece of work, the creative duo lucked out when, after a year of persuasion, they convinced the Wild Man himself to be involved in the project. But let's not get ahead of ourselves....

Lawrence Wayne Fischer's troubles began during childhood. His father died when he was young and his

mother, in his own words, hated him. While the rest of his family sat at the dinner table, Larry was forced to stand at the sink to eat. He used to buy year-long passes for Disneyland just so he could go along and get a glimpse of how 'real' family life was. Aged sixteen he was institutionalized for attacking his mother with a knife.

When released he was not allowed to live with his family anymore and drifted around Los Angeles offering original songs for sale for a dime; if someone gave him a dime he would instantly create a wholly original song...in his own unmistakable style. He was taken in (some would say 'discovered') by Frank Zappa with whom he recorded his first album, and the incredible musical journey of Larry Fischer had begun.

Given the "Wild Man" nickname by none other than the late 'King Of Rock 'n' Soul' Solomon Burke, Fischer played shows with the likes of Janis Joplin and The Byrds and appeared on legendary US TV show Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In before a thrown bottle that narrowly missed an infant Moon Zappa saw Larry's relationship with her father end abruptly. Championed as the 'poster child of outsider music', a genre littered with acts like Captain Beefheart and Tiny Tim, Fischer would go on to record the first ever release from Rhino Records, get the John Peel seal of approval and even record a duet with legendary US singer and actress Rosemary Clooney.

While his cult status as an artist continued to grow, the demons of manic depression and schizophrenia followed suit. Some of the resulting antics created seminal tales of craziness - a prime example being when Fischer asked a fan if he could use his toilet only to be found some time later pinching one out in the man's closet. The new owner of the turd proudly preserved it and charged people a fee to enter his home and see it - and a slew of now-memorable songs, but the harsh facts concern a man struggling with a serious mental condition.

Interviews with the likes of Weird Al Yankovic, Devo's Mark Mothersbaugh and vintage footage of Frank Zappa, among a host of others, paint a crazed, colourful picture of the Wild Man, though Zappa's widow Gail offers possibly the most telling contribution, stating that Fischer (at the time of filming) looked like a very exhausted version of the person she once knew. While it would be incredibly hard not to warm to Fischer after watching the filmmakers follow him around, quizzing him on his career and getting him to perform songs at various times, and when watching various examples of his live performances, it does border on the uneasy at times, especially when we see Larry in serious need of help. Gail Zappa's comment does not ring hollow.

Around the start of filming in 2003, a man was shot dead in Larry's motel on Sunset Boulevard. Convinced that he would be next, he disappeared with no money and just the clothes on his back. Three months later he turned up at his elderly aunt's house in a vagrant-like state and clearly in need of medical assistance. No sooner had he appeared more settled his Aunt Josephine was diagnosed with terminal cancer leaving Larry to mind her house and dog while he awaited her release from hospital, a release which would inevitably result in him having to go into an assisted-living facility as she would need the around the clock care that her troubled nephew could never

provide for her.

The scenes of Larry living the life of grime in her house are sad to watch; sad and horrible. Harboured intense paranoia, at one point suggesting that the person who wants him dead is Steven Spielberg, Fischer's actions make for some uncomfortable viewing. The voyeuristic feel to watching some of the man's eccentric performances is suddenly replaced by something more akin to intrusion, with the filming of his near-collapse while visiting Josephine in the hospital being particularly hard to watch. Material of this kind is the fat on which cancerous press feed, and you can imagine how lucky the filmmakers must have felt to be there capturing this documentary gold. But the creative team behind this film are not the soulless suckers of Satan's cock who would sell their first born for a whiff of a scandal. They have befriended the Wild Man and, to their credit, they manage to justify the invasion of privacy.

Even more to their credit, they have fashioned a documentary that introduces an otherwise forgotten musical maverick to a whole new generation. The film is, if not entertaining, thoroughly absorbing. Larry Fischer's story, both funny and tragic, deserved to be told and these guys have done a passionate, honourable job with it.

Want a happy ending? In 2004 Larry entered an assisted-living facility and began controlling his condition with medication. The only problem, he has lost 'the pep', his talent for original song creation....

Available on a Region 0 NTSC disc from MVD Visual, 'Derailroaded : Inside The Mind Of Larry "Wild Man" Fischer' contains a solid amount of bonus material, including deleted scenes, commentaries, extra song performances and deleted scenes. The finest extra though, to this cult movie fan at least, is the interview with 'Dolemite' himself, Rudy Ray Moore. Mistakenly believing that Moore is a fan of Fischer - he has no idea who he is - the legend of black cinema proceeds to gift the filmmakers a lengthy interview that covers his career, both acting and music-wise. It has nothing to do with Larry Fischer but, as a curio, is essential viewing.

Oh, and I dare any viewer of this film to walk away without the song 'Merry Go Round' hanging around their impressed head....

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