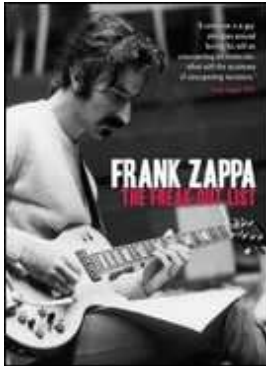


[Home](#)[Reviews](#)[Interviews](#)[Upcoming  
DVD  
Releases](#)[Cinema](#)[TV](#)[Pixel](#)[Podcast](#)**Case Number 18746: Small Claims Court****Frank Zappa: The Freak Out List**

[MVD Visual](#) // 2010 // 88 Minutes // Not Rated  
Reviewed by Judge Victor Valdivia // April 20th, 2010

- [View Judge Valdivia's Dossier](#)
- [E-mail Judge Valdivia](#)

[Buy Now](#)

A list of Judge Victor Valdivia's influences would include things that are either illegal or unsavory.

[Print This](#) [Discuss This](#)

ADD THIS

**Scales of Justice**

**Judgment:** 70

**Perp Profile**

**Studio:** [MVD Visual](#)

**Video Formats:**

- Full Frame

**Audio Formats:**

- Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

**Subtitles:**

- None

**Running Time:** 88 Minutes

**Release Year:** 2010

**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated

**Genres:**

- [Concerts and Musicals](#)
- [Documentary](#)

**Distinguishing Marks**

- Featurette

**Accomplices**

- [Zappa.com](#)
- [DVD Verdict interview with Gail Zappa](#)

**Ads by Google**[CD DVD](#)[Musical DVD](#)[Online DVD](#)[DVD Series](#)**The Charge**

Zappa under the influence.

**The Case**

Maybe it's not possible to make a truly enthralling DVD about a musician's influences. Maybe delineating how those influences shaped an artist, while an interesting intellectual exercise that could lead to a good essay, isn't particularly visual or dramatic. That's apparently the only reason why **Frank Zappa: The Freak Out List** is so uninvolved even though it's crafted carefully and thoughtfully. The producers have gone to the trouble of licensing music from Zappa and other key artists, they've interviewed knowledgeable sources, including former members of Zappa's bands, and they've assembled these interviews, music, and archival footage into a structure that's informative and easy to understand. Even so, however, it's hard to imagine that even the most devout Zappa fan will want to watch this DVD more than once.

The idea behind this DVD is simple. On the liner notes to *Freak Out!*, the 1967 debut album by Zappa's original band the Mothers of Invention, Zappa listed some seventy-two names on the liner notes and cited them as influences. **The Freak Out List** intends to explore who these artists are and what influence they had on Zappa's music. This listing encompasses all sorts of music, from classical composer Edgar Varese to R&B star Johnny "Guitar" Watson to



jazzman Eric Dolphy to flamenco guitarist Sabicas. By mixing footage and songs by some of these artists and comparing them to some of Zappa's music, the DVD explains how it's possible to hear their influence on his music. You can hear for instance, how the esoteric classical influence of Varese shaped Zappa's long-form epics like "Lumpy Gravy" or how Dolphy's instrumental prowess led Zappa to incorporate jazz-fusion on albums like *Weasels Ripped My Flesh!* (1970), which even included a song titled "The Eric Dolphy Memorial Barbecue." Interviews with various Zappa biographers and music historians as well as musicians George Duke, Ian Underwood, and Don Preston, all of whom played in the Mothers at one time or another, help add additional context.

This is all well-presented. Nonetheless, it's not especially scintillating. Much of the problem is that there aren't really any revelations here. Anyone who studied Zappa's music and career already knows who his influences were because he cited them constantly, both in the press and onstage. It's also easy to trace his musical influences because Zappa frequently made music that deliberately called attention to them. *Cruising with Ruben and the Jets*, his 1968 album, pays tribute to Zappa's love of doo-wop by presenting Zappa and the Mothers making straight-up doo-wop music. Similarly, Zappa also made clear his reverence for avant-garde classical music by making avant-garde classical albums like *Orchestral Favorites* (1979) and *Thing-Fish* (1984). It's not that the DVD is badly argued or presented, but Zappa fans will already know much of this information and Zappa newcomers will find many of the references and stories too obscure and insular. MVD Visual's previous Zappa DVD, [Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention in the 1960s](#), was full of rare and interesting footage and stories, but this one doesn't really add anything to Zappa's legacy, making its appeal questionable.

Technically, the DVD is decent. The full-screen transfer and stereo mix are both satisfactory, even with all the archival footage. The only extra of note is a tiny featurette, "Frank Zappa's Desert Island Discs" (4:37), which discusses a couple of classical albums that Zappa cited as his favorites. It's pretty disposable and adds nothing to the DVD. Consumer note: though the liner notes promise "Extended Interviews," there are none anywhere on the disc.

Ultimately, what **The Freak Out List** proves is that even with impeccable research and production coupled with an artist whose influences were numerous and clear, it's hard to make one of these DVDs all that interesting. It's far superior to Eagle Rock's **Down the Tracks** series, which attempted the same idea with both Bob Dylan and Led Zeppelin, since this disc, unlike those, licenses crucial music and interviews people who actually have something to say. Even then, however, it's hard to imagine that even the most devout Zappa fan will get much out of this, let alone viewers unfamiliar with him. To get this story, you could do just as well to read a Zappa biography and simply listen to his music instead.

#### The Verdict

Guilty of not really saying anything new.

#### Similar Decisions

- [Stagedoor \(2006\)](#)
- [Thinking XXX](#)



**NETFLIX**

Watch Movies  
From Netflix

**FREE TRIAL**

Rent *Where the Wild Things Are* today!

[Click here](#)







- [The End Of America](#)
- [The History Channel Presents: The Race To The Moon](#)

Give us your feedback!

Did we give **Frank Zappa: The Freak Out List** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

Share your thoughts on this review in the [Jury Room](#)



 <p><b>Six Feet Under Season 3 - BRAND NEW</b></p> <p>\$10.00</p>	 <p><b>Night at the Museum (DVD, 2007, Full ...</b></p> <p>\$3.07</p>	 <p><b>Major League Baseball Memorable Momen...</b></p> <p>\$6.00</p>	 <p><b>ANGEL Seasons 1- 5 / 36 DVD Set / ...</b></p> <p>\$33.00</p>	 <p><b>Cannonball Run (DVD, 2001)</b></p> <p>\$3.00</p>	 <p><b>Brand New Toy Story 1 &amp; 2 (DVD, 2005,...</b></p> <p>\$16.99</p>
<span>eBay</span> <span style="float: right;"><a href="#">View All</a></span>					

[Subscribe](#) | [Have your DVD reviewed](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Contact us](#)

Review content copyright © 2010 Victor Valdivia; Site design and review layout copyright © 2010 HipClick Designs LLC. All rights reserved.