

Mesquite Local News

Frank Zappa: The Freak-Out List

Sexy Intellectual

Movie: B-

Special Features: D+

This one is for Frank Zappa fans, and Zappa fans only. It's a very dry, talky look at some of the key musical influences of Zappa, which he listed in the liner notes of his debut album, "Freak Out." Those influences include everybody from Bob Dylan to composers like Edgar Varese ("The present day composer refuses to die!"), Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg.

Fans familiar with Zappa's works, such as "Lumpy Gravy" and "Freak Out" will appreciate the musical comparisons the makers of this documentary illustrate. One can truly hear distinct similarities in old Schoenberg and Varese compositions, composers who perhaps weren't as accessible as, say, Mozart. The film does a decent job of pointing out how Zappa absorbed many of his influences while creating a sound that was very much his own.

As a Zappa fan, I found it very nice to watch this near ninety-minute documentary where highly intellectual musicians and historians with cool British accents treat Frank like the master composer he was. This piece wasn't authorized by The Zappa Family Trust, but it certainly stands as a respectable, if not overtly dynamic, examination of the man and his tastes.

Special Features: A feature called "Frank Zappa's Desert Island Discs" which is kind of a strange look at albums that Frank had or would've had...I guess.

- Bob Grimm