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Zappa, Frank: The Freak Out List

No rock-'n'-roll artist has challenged his audience more than **Frank Zappa**, who died in 1993 at the age of 52. Although his biting satirical early material was accessible to the growing audience of brainy hippies and students in the mid-1960s, the music behind it betrayed Zappa's intellectualism and eclectic tastes. In the liner notes for his deceptively brilliant debut album, **Freak Out**, he provided a list of his influences for anyone who wanted to understand what made his music tick.

Those who did were made aware of such disparate sources as composers **Arnold Schoenberg, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky and Edgar Varese**; jazz musicians **Roland Kirk, Charles Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Eric Dolphy and Bill Evans**; and too many blues, doo-wop and R&B performers to mention here. Listen carefully to his albums and it's possible to detect almost all of them. The Freak Out List is a respectful and surprisingly scholarly discussion of Zappa's music and how he was influenced by the people on the list. Older fans, I think, will find it far most interesting than casual listeners, in that the scholars and critics interviewed apparently don't share Zappa's sometimes-outrageous sense of humor. As someone who bought **Freak Out** in its original release – to the great consternation of my father – I found the documentary to be fascinating. – *Gary Dretzka*