

June 15, 2010

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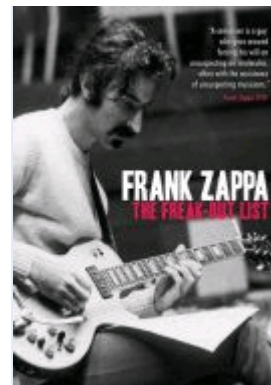


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"A composer is a guy who goes around forcing his will on unsuspecting air molecules, often with the assistance of unsuspecting musicians." Frank Zappa

Frank Zappa, the author of such landmark recordings like *Freak Out!*, *We're Only In It For The Money*, *Hot Rats*, *The Grand Wazoo* and many more that I could mention, is a fascinating rock and roll figure. His musical canon with The Mother's of Invention which incidentally used to be called The Mothers but was thought to be a little too controversial, speaks for itself. He is surely one of the most influential musicians of our generation.



The Freak-Out List, released by Sexy Intellectual, provides a wealth of information for those interested in the enigmatic musician. This DVD explores Zappa's initial forays into music and includes interviews with former members of The Mother's Of Invention (Ian Underwood, Don Preston, George Duke), Frank Zappa biographers Ben Watson and Greg Russo, music professors David Nichols and Stuart Nicholson, Doo-Wop musical historians Robert Pruter and John Runowicz and many others.

On his aptly titled debut album *Freak Out!* released in 1966, Zappa curiously lists 179 people whom he considered to be his most prominent influences. The DVD spends much of the time exploring these influences and primarily focuses on the Russian classical composer Igor Stravinsky, most noted for his classic *The Rites Of Spring* and Frenchman Edgar Varese who is probably regarded as Zappa's biggest influence. Zappa was intensely interested in Varese's seminal work *Ionisation*, a piece written entirely for

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percussion which he was intrigued by. Don Preston explains *"I think that excited him because he couldn't understand it right off the bat."* It is also interesting to note the following Varese quote *"The present-day composer refuses to die!"* appears on the *Freak Out!* album and on subsequent Zappa releases. Clearly Varese was very important to Zappa throughout his musical career. I also found it interesting that Zappa did not separate music into distinguishable genres. For example, he considered esoteric classical music and Doo-Wop music, just that, music, and did not feel the need to separate the genres. Perhaps this was how he was able to embrace such obscure musical forms and incorporate them into his own repertoire creating an incredibly diverse body of work.

The DVD also explores Zappa's interest in Doo-Wop and R&B. It is all very interesting and those who like documentary style films will eat this up. While archival footage of Zappa and The Mothers is included I would have loved to have seen more. As such, the film does seem a little dry and over analytical but it is a fascinating look at Zappa's career and will be of interest for anyone wanting to learn more about this legendary musician.

Chapters:

1. Intro
2. The List
3. Classical Variations
4. Fountain Of Love
5. Keep It Greasy
6. Jazz From Hell

Bonus

-  Frank Zappa's Desert Island Discs
-  Contributor's Biogs
-  Beyond DVD

Added: June 14th 2010

Reviewer: Jon Neudorf

Score: ★★★★★

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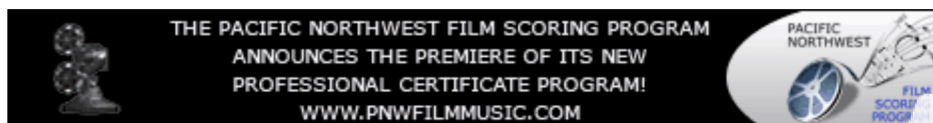
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