



# EVERY PIXEL TELLS A STORY

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## Derailroded: Inside the Mind of Larry "Wild Man" Fischer

[MVDvisual]

It seems that whenever a documentary is made about one of rock 'n' roll's eccentric crazies, it gets passed on to me to review, e.g. Roky Erickson, Gary Wilson...

For years after being released from a mental institution, Larry Fischer roamed LA, selling his impromptu songs for a dime a ditty. Which was enough to land him on *Laugh-In* and Frank Zappa's radar. But this isn't about Zappa, who named him "Wild Man" only to be outraged when, during one of Larry's tantrums, a hurled bottle almost struck the infant Moon Unit.

Wild Man Fischer outlived Zappa.

He will not watch television, nor read *Reader's Digest*. He wore one glove years before Michael Jackson, and says he's bigger than either the Beatles or the Falling James (Moreland)!

At first it was thought to be an act, but when that first Warner Bros.-issued, Zappa-produced LP, *An Evening with Wild Man Fischer*, came out, with its cover depicting Larry holding a knife against an elderly woman's throat, family members were reminded that he had been institutionalized for doing much the same to his own mother! His life became art, and they were none too pleased.

Larry was not the first schizophrenic to be accepted as an "artiste," but he served

to smelt crazy shit out of his daily routine, turning his disabilities into theater, which extends to guys like Andy Kaufman and Daniel Johnston.

No one interviewed for Josh Rubin's film can confirm why this guy went unchecked for fifty years – not Gail Zappa nor the guys who founded Rhino Records (for whom Wild Man Fischer recorded their initial release, jumpstarting the little indie that would become the largest indie ever), not Mark Mothersbaugh, not Dr. Demento, whom Larry believed was trying to cut off his penis! But all still agree that what he called his "pep" was artistic inspiration for songs like "Merry Go Round" and "My Name is Larry." A case can be made that Wild Man Fischer contributed to what Richard Meltzer called "the unknown tongue" of rock. His "Boop. Boop. Boop." and mastery of made-up consonant-driven



non-words certainly connected to the 1,800 who bought his first album, but then those were probably the same select few with an affinity for Yoko and the guttural growl of Patty Waters, who later would start punk bands. After everyone else washed Wild Man out of their spheres, Barnes and Barnes, the Dr. Demento favorites featuring Bill Mumy (of *Lost in Space*) recorded even more of Larry's songs.

And thought he may have been crazy, Larry Fischer was completely aware of record company corruption and the attitude that "we could be selling tires for all it matters"

disengagement the label hierarchy has for its product. Wild Man Fischer survived.

As an aside to Jeff Clark: if anyone makes a film about John Trubee and the Ugly Janitors of American, don't send it my way!  
—David T. Lindsay

## Bowie, Iggy & Lou 1971-1973: The Sacred Triangle

[Sexy Intellectual]

The feature-length documentary *Bowie, Iggy & Lou 1971-1973: The Sacred Triangle* makes a fascinating attempt to trace all the connecting lines between the careers of David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed, and to show how they intersected during those three years when each of the artists recorded a career-making classic album. For Bowie it was *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars* (1972), for Reed it was *Transformer* (1972), and for Iggy, *Raw Power* (1973). It's no secret that these nascent artists knew each other and worked together, but who helped who? And who stole what from whom? *The Sacred Triangle* tries to sort it all out.

Director/editor Alec Linsell's 107-minute film overflows with astounding vintage film clips, and the soundtrack comes loaded with an impressive quantity of music, many songs running for almost their entirety. This alone makes *Triangle* a must-see for devotees of these performers. The images of the young Reed in the Warhol Factory/Velvet Underground footage (with a glimpse of a masked Iggy cavorting through Nico's "Evening of Light" promo film) definitely make the disc a keeper.

However, Linsell apparently couldn't get any of the three principals to sit for a new interview. Instead, aside from a handful of old archival interviews, he relies on the participation of such hangers-on such as Warhol Factory regular Billy Name and Bowie's ex-wife Angela. Name immediately makes an idiot of himself on camera by declaring that Andy Warhol was the first American fine-arts artist (thereby cavalierly discarding a century's worth of painters from Whistler to Jackson Pollock), and Angie Bowie makes the ridiculous assertion that there "wasn't anybody in America who wasn't aware of



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Boys keep swinging: Bowie, Pop and Reed

The Velvet Underground," a stance which is later quietly disputed when the film's own narration mentions the group's "meager impact on the charts."

Faring far better is transgendered singer Jayne County, who amusingly describes public reaction to a Warhol stage production as "98% horror." (A charming visual detail on screen during most of County's segments is a bright neon-green 7-inch single by Atlanta punk band Dead Elvis, propped on a shelf behind her.) Also providing priceless anecdotes is Lee (yeah, with three e's) Black Childers, who worked with Warhol and was later the vice president of Bowie's management company, MainMan. Of particular note is his hilarious account of sequestering Iggy and the band at a house in Los Angeles, with a Cadillac and a secretary, essentially just to keep them from creating any distractions for the press during Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* tour.

Bowie's self-serving imitation and manipulation of other artists is a continuing theme in *Triangle*. The film portrays Reed as a streetwise original and paints Pop as an originator who was largely Reed-inspired (apparently Iggy first caught the fever after seeing The Velvets in '66), whereas Bowie is colored as a chameleon who purloined his act piecemeal from the other two. After failing to make an impression with such early novelty records as "The Laughing Gnome" (the obligatory sound bite from that odious Alvin-and-the Chipmunks imitation is

mercifully brief), Bowie is then shown quoting liberally from Reed's "Venus In Furs" in his own "Little Toy Soldier." And if James Osterberg could reinvent himself as a daring glitter-rocker named Iggy, Bowie could just as easily craft an otherworldly alternate persona and call himself, hmmm, how about *Ziggy*?

1971, the year in which Bowie had a legendary New York dinner meeting with Reed (after which they both attended an Iggy gig) also heralded the birth of English Glam Rock. (This documentary would make a *superb* primer for anyone preparing to watch the 1998 drama *Velvet Goldmine!*) Bowie was right in the thick of that too, wisely making notes, and even penned "All the Young Dudes" for Mott The Hoople. In an on-camera interview, music historian Dave Thompson observes that Bowie "took a lot of his leads from Marc Bolan," and indeed, the T. Rex frontman gets so much screen time here that one begins to wonder if the titular *Triangle* actually had many more sides.

Intrigued by this film's two cryptic references to Dana Gillespie, a celebrity I knew only for her work as the "tits girl" in British fantasy films such as *The People That Time Forgot*, I did a little follow-up research and discovered her extensive music career. It includes a 1973 Bowie-penned, Bowie-produced single entitled "Andy Warhol." (YouTube it, baby!) Oh, and she even sang (uncredited) on *Ziggy Stardust*. Apparently this "tri-angle" was more like a decagonal trapezohedron. —Gregory Nicoll