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From Straight To Bizarre

REVIEWED BY: Kami Posted on 30/07/2012



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In 1968, Frank Zappa, wanting to free himself from his record deal with Verve set up his own his own company and label under the Bizarre moniker, picking up numerous outsider and lunatic artists along the way including Captain Beefheart, Alice Cooper, all girl groupie band The GTO's and even folkie Tim Buckley. While the move wasn't a commercial success, apart from Zappa's own releases, in its very brief existence, some three or so years, Straight/Bizarre gave the world many classic albums, including Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*, Alice Cooper's first recordings and Tim Buckley's stunning *Starsailor* LP.

Without turning into a whitewash fan-boy doco, this production follows the story from Zappa's early production failure with Sandy Hurvitz (Zappa didn't like being told what to do it seems) to his first Bizarre label signing Wild Man Fischer, the stunning madness and manipulations of Captain Beefheart right up to the final acts, the likes of Tim Buckley and Judy Henske signed by his manager/cohort Herb Cohen as well as Acapella group The Persuasions.

Along the way we hear from Pamela Des Barres (GTO's and groupie extraordinaire) Bill Harkelroad and John French (Captain Beefheart's Magic Band) Dennis Dunaway and Neal Smith from The Alice Cooper

band (when it still was the band and not just the alter ego of Vince!), Jeff Simmons and Jerry (The Persuasions) Lawson. We hear the true harrowing story of Beefheart's manipulation and bullying of his Magic Band members to create the masterpiece that is *Trout Mask Replica*, we discover that Frank didn't like being told what to do, (he leaves more than one production job in the lurch!) and we see and hear more damn good music than most record labels can muster in twenty years let alone three. With three different Zappa biographers, Barry Miles, Billy James and Ben Watson along for the ride, plus the likes of Kim Fowley, Mark Paytress and Richie Unterberger talking about the ups and downs of the whole venture this really is an honest and thorough appraisal of the misguided venture, commercially doomed as it was.

Filled with archival footage, clips, music, insight and, for a change, some truths instead of just fan-boy bleating (though of course there is a little of that too) this doco may run well over two hours but to be honest, it probably could have gone even longer. It never outstays its welcome, it drags you in, gives you

the stories behind the bands, the artists, the albums and most importantly makes you want to go check the artists themselves out. You are left understanding just what a brave venture the whole thing was in the first place and just how far ahead of their time, Zappa, Beefheart and their cohorts were. Now if you will excuse me, Alice is calling, I have to go and turn the record over.

DISC DETAILS:

DIRECTOR(S): Various | COUNTRY: UK | YEAR 2011 | DISTRIBUTOR(S): MVD / Sexy Intellectual | RUNNING TIME: 161 minutes | ASPECT RATIO: 1:33:1 | REGION: All / PAL | DISCS: 1

EXTRAS:

- The Art Of Persuasion – The Persuasions and Frank Zappa
- Hunger – The struggles of the Magic Band
- Contributor Biographies

RECOMMENDED VIEWING:

- [Frank Zappa – Baby Snakes](#)
- [Captain Beefheart – Under Review](#)
- [Tim Buckley: My Fleeting House](#)
- [Frank Zappa: Apostrophe / Over-Nite Sensation](#)
- [Good To See You Again, Alice Cooper – Live 1973 – Billion Dollar Babies Tour](#)

IMAGE GALLERY:

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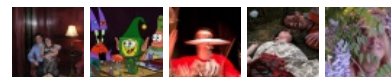
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