



From Straight To Bizarre

Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper And LA's Lunatic Fringe Sexy Intellectual DVD This considered examination of the eccentric landscape of the infamous Bizarre/Straight catalogue makes for compelling viewing and with a running time of some two hours and 40 minutes the film gives its subject the screen time it so richly deserves.

Created by Zappa and Mothers manager Herb Cohen in 1968 as a release outlet specialising in the weird, the wonderful and the strictly non mainstream following Zappa's clashes with his former label MGM over the old stumbling block of artistic control the extraordinary Bizarre/Straight story is infamous for having given the world such unforgettable cultural landmarks as An Evening With Wild Man Fischer and Trout Mask Replica. With Zappa operating as LA's resident king of the freaks from his Laurel Canyon hideaway, the documentary chronicles the labels groundbreaking appetite for assembling a notorious roster of misfits including The GTOs, Wild Man Fischer, Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band, Lenny Bruce, Lord Buckley, Tim Buckley, accappella gospel group The Persuations and the labels greatest commercial success Alice Cooper via the input of interviewees including Pamela Des Barres, Kim Fowley, Bill Harkleroad, John French, Neal Smith, Dennis Dunaway, Jeff Simmons and an impressive array of vintage performance footage. While the Bizarre/Straight era represented a unique chapter in the annals of the late 60s and early 70s the thrust of the film's critical commentary is that if the entire Bizarre/Straight operation had only given the world Trout Mask Replica it would still have more than have achieved its goal. Thankfully as the film reminds us it did this and a whole lot more besides.

- Grahame Bent