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From Straight to Bizarre: Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and L.A.'s Lunatic Fringe (2012)

FEB 15 Posted by [JT](#)



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From Straight to Bizarre:
Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and L.A.'s Lunatic Fringe
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Frank Zappa was an artistic genius. Sadly, that genius is still misunderstood even today, and that is also the case with many of the acts signed to his Bizarre and Straight labels, from [Captain Beefheart](#) to [Wild Man Fischer](#). Frustrated with his contract with Verve and the lack of promotion of The Mothers of Invention's [Freak Out](#) in 1966, Zappa formed his own imprint label with manager Herb Cohen and signed other eclectic, under-the-radar musicians. [From Straight to Bizarre](#) chronicles that time in Zappa's career and the artists involved.

Perhaps you have heard of [Alice Cooper](#)? As much success as the shock rocker has enjoyed, the Alice Cooper band (originally called Nazz) got its start on the Straight label. Original band members Dennis Dunaway and Neal Smith spoke candidly on the DVD about their early years and the struggles they faced; Zappa was not a fan of their drug abuse and even walked out on their recording sessions. However, Dunaway recognizes that without Zappa's support, Alice Cooper would probably never have made it in the first place.

Captain Beefheart is the other artist heavily featured on the documentary. Financial struggles, creative differences, and personality clashes were unavoidable at the time, especially without a “mainstream” sound. Despite this, Captain Beefheart managed to release the most noteworthy non-Zappa album on the Straight label, [Trout Mask Replica](#), in 1969.

Zappa’s label was ultimately a failure, but there were so many interesting artists involved. *From Straight to Bizarre* examines the [GTOs](#), [Lenny Bruce](#), [Lord Buckley](#), and even an acapella gospel group [The Persuasions](#). To say Zappa had an ear for the eclectic would be an understatement. Unfortunately that did not translate into good business sense or financial success, and the label disappeared in just a few years.

This documentary clocks in at two hours and forty minutes, but there isn’t a moment wasted during that time. Footage of the bands involved, interviews, and samples of the music make *From Straight to Bizarre* well worth the watch.

[Purchase From Straight to Bizarre: Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and L.A.'s Lunatic Fringe.](#)



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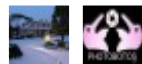
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About JT

Music lover, occasional writer, wishing he had immeasurable wealth so he didn't have to work a "real job."

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