

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2012

CD Reviews: Three Old School Comedy Classics

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Images from the Internet

Once upon a time, there was a label called Laff Records, who specialized in comedy and adult albums. Somewhere I still have a Redd Foxx release on the brand. Now, fortunately, these three have been rereleased and distributed by the following companies:

[Cult Collectibles](#)

[MVDaudio.com](#)



Volume 1: Jimmy Lynch

Nigger, Please, 1977 / 2012

Jimmy Lynch was – and is – a versatile act. He's a fiery James Brown-style soul singer, an actor who has appeared in all of his friend Rudy Ray Moore's (d. 2008) Dolemite films such as *Disco Godfather* and *The Human Tornado*, and has been doing both proud and self-deprecating racial humor for decades. He's also known for his two characters, the Funky Tramp and Petey Wheatstraw.

Lynch's style is to tell short story-jokes, averaging about 2 minutes, that either pit a racist white person against a wiser and occasionally

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About Me

Robert Barry Francos

Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

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(righteously) angry person of color, or two African Americans in strange situations being both self-deprecating and wise at the same time.

While made up by me, this could be a typical start of a Jimmy Lynch story: This [word from album title] motherfuckah walks into a bar, and the fucking white man behind the counter says, "We don't want your motherfucking kind up in this here place. Get your black ass outta here boy, before I start somethin', and the motherfuckin' [word from cover] says..." etc.

Sometimes he'll make himself the center of the story in a boastful manner, even using the Dolemite way of rhyming. This is among my favorite things he does. An example is, "If I can't do it, it can't be done, layin' in the bed... and havin' a whole lot of fun."

This album is culled from two sets at the Amber Lite Club in Gardena, CA. Jimmy comes in singing, does a lot of humorous stories, and ends on a serious note with a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., by quoting part of the infamous 1963 *I Have a Dream* speech from the Lincoln Memorial.

Part of Lynch's charm is his down-home manner and stylistic patter. His storytelling style may be a dated, and honestly, there are some jokes I don't get being the white boy in the room, but generally, he's pretty funny.



Volume 2: Redd Foxx

I Ain't Lied Yet!, 1978 / 2012

Taped live at a club a year after the end of the run of *Sanford and Son* (1971-1977), Redd Foxx (d. 1991) is also a storyteller, but while his material is equally as vulgar, he doesn't swear, relying more on euphemisms. For example, in one story he tells, after making "sandwiches" at a drive in with her boyfriend, her father comments, "That must be mayonnaise running down your leg."

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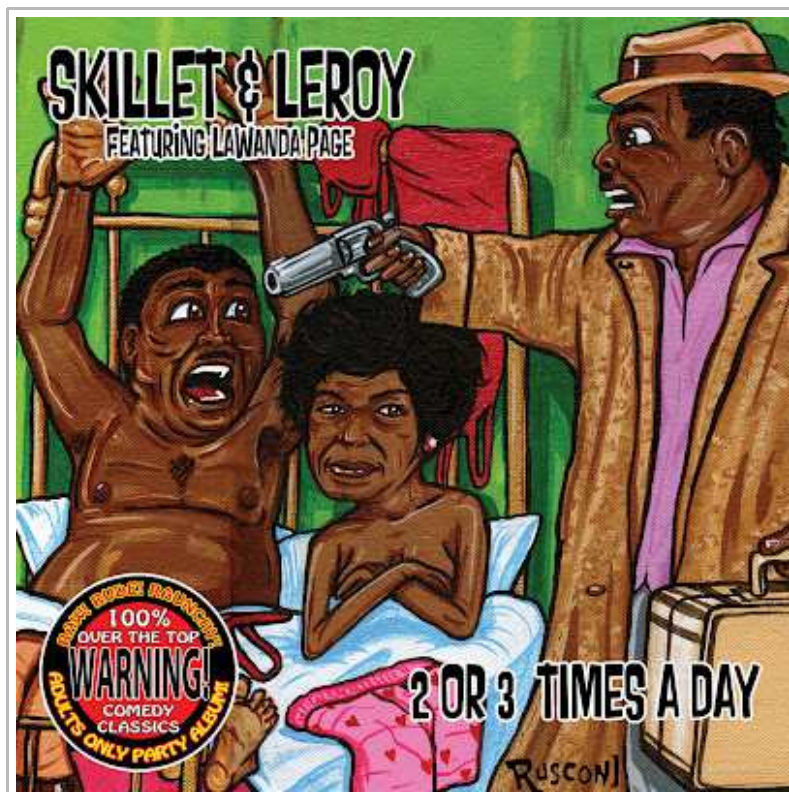
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Some of the stories are classic, like his adaption of the Tonto snakebite “You’re going to die” tale. Like every comic worth his salt from the chitlin’ circuit, there was the black and white issue, and you know whose side he falls on. One response he has a character say is, “Yes, boss. And remember boss spelled backwards is double SOB.” Heck, he even tells the joke about sneezes making one orgasm that Buddy Hackett was also known for, though I don’t know who told it first (I guessing it predates both, perhaps even to burlesque or vaudeville).

Comparing Foxx to Lynch is interesting. They both talk about sex a lot, but Foxx rarely, ever curses (from a video-taped show in the ‘80s, though, it was obvious this would change) and usually allude to body parts rather than talking “pussy and dick.” The closest he comes here, for example, would be something like “Where do twins come from? Aunt holes.” There is also very little reference to racial differences, relying more on boasting about Blacks rather than putting down other races. However, there are a number of gay jokes, which even in 1978 were quite common, with the Stonewall riots less than a decade old and the reverberations of the power of gay lib not yet having the power it would rightfully deserve.

A lot of the material here is almost a “best of” because I have heard variations of a lot of it elsewhere by other comedians (e.g., the punchline, “I know you’re drunk, that cat is leaving” is one I know on a comedy album from circa the early ‘60s; could have been Rusty Warren).

It’s easy to see why Foxx was among the top Black comics on the circuit, because he was funny, he had a very distinctive voice (both literally and figuratively), and he managed to be shocking without being verbally offensive to others (except for the aforementioned homophobic patter, though he never uses a negative descriptive slur).



Volume 3: Skillet and Leroy, Featuring LaWanda Page
2 or 3 Times a Day, 1969 / 2012

While Ernest "Skillet" Mayhand (d. 2007) and Leroy "Sloppy" Daniels (d. 1993) are given credit, this album also features underrated comic veteran, *Sanford and Son* co-star and Redd Foxx foil, LaWanda "Aunt Esther" Page (d. 2002). She's as much a part of this album as they are, but she only gets a "featuring" role. Shades of Carol Cleveland!

Anyhoo, the Record is broken up into two segments. The first is Leroy telling a series of story-jokes, much like Foxx (Skillet and Leroy played Fred Sanford's buddies on the show, as well) and Lynch. Some of them are actually pretty funny, such as the "Fishin'" story involving three kids saving the Governor of Alabama from drowning.

The other part is more freewheeling as Skillet and Page do a series of set pieces playing a husband and wife who bicker, with Leroy showing up occasionally. This seems a bit more improv, but is terribly mic'd. They fade in and out and talk over each other, making it hard to make out. Page may not get the credit she deserves (did you know she started as a fire-eating stripper before she got into comedy?), but she does have the best lines.

Like Foxx, the team relies more on pseudonyms than direct body parts, hardly ever directly using cuss words (though weed is referred to as "some good shit you got here" at some point) or body parts, but it's pretty obvious what they mean when they describe something as looking like "Castro." Most of the material is intra-Black cultural comedy with a bit of racial tension mixed in, and again, there certainly is some homophobic humor (especially straight – pun not intended – at the start).

While the most successful segments are the stand-up stories, this is not as true for the set pieces, which seem to have a physical element that does not translate well to the album. They may be funny as all hell, but enough gets lost on just the auditory that is irreparable. That is why the standing at the mic pieces work better, even if they sometimes feel forced.

It is true that by the time this record came out, S&L had been performing together for over a dozen years, but perhaps this led to shortcuts that are lost on me. I would love to see them perform (obviously on tape) more than merely hear them, because apparently they appeal to more than one sense at a time.

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at 12:01 AM 

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[Robert Barry Francos](#) [September 8, 2012 1:15 PM](#)

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