

THE RONDO HATTON REPORT VOL XI

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1. STRAVINSKY'S INFLUENCE IN FRANK ZAPPA'S MUSIC, PART 2

John Anthony

Compositional Technique #2: Stratification

The second compositional technique Zappa borrowed from Stravinsky was the use of stratification. Stratification is the separation of musical ideas/areas juxtaposed in time. Because most of the ideas that are presented are only short fragments and often do not resolve, this causes tension.¹ Stravinsky incorporates this technique in *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*.² Within the first minute and a half, Stravinsky incorporates this technique by giving the listener harsh dissonances created by the high woodwinds that bounce back and forth from a more Bach-like chorale from the brass section. At each instance, the listener is given uncomfortably unresolved fragments.

The biggest use of stratification in Zappa's own compositional work is "Echnida's Arf (Of You)" and "Don't You Ever Wash That Thing?" Both of these recordings appear on *Roxy & Elsewhere* and *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore (Vol. 2)*. The songs are always played together back to back and most fans consider these to be one big song. For this paper, I will look at the version that appears on *Roxy & Elsewhere*.

Throughout this thirteen and a half minute song, Zappa uses over forty different instances of stratification. Most of these fragments appear twice – some being played verbatim as some are changed slightly with a different instrumentation, tempo, or an extra measure tagged on at the end. The table analysis of this will begin at 2:26 of "Echnida's Arf (Of You)." Each new row on the table represents a new occurrence of stratification. As shown from the below, most of the fragments last two to seven seconds long. The longest sections occur during the improvised solos as well as the cadenzas.

¹ Cone, Edward. T. "Stravinsky: The Progress of A Method." In *Music: A View From Delft*. Ed. Robert P. Morgan. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1989): 294.

² Cone, Edward. T. "Stravinsky: The Progress of A Method." In *Music: A View From Delft*. Ed. Robert P. Morgan. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1989): 294.

"Echnida's Arf (Of You)" Stratification Analysis

Time	Time Signature	Description
2:26 – 2:31	4/4, 3/4	Entire band builds up on half notes
2:32 – 2:35	4/4	Horns create dissonances, Vibes and Keys running sextuplet arpeggios
2:36 – 2:39	4/4	Keyboard groove established from beginning
2:40 – 2:42	4/4	Horns create dissonances, Vibes and Keys running sextuplet arpeggios
2:43 – 2:46	4/4	Keyboard groove established again
2:47 – 2:50	4/4	Horns create dissonances, Sextuplets appear again – entire section elongated a measure
2:50 – 3:00	4/4	New Groove Established
3:00 – 3:06	4/4	Entire band builds up on half notes (one measure added this time)
3:07 – 3:23	5/16	Keyboards, horns play moving sixteenth notes. Rhythm section hits on downbeats of 1.
3:24 – 3:43	5/16	Rhythm section becomes more involved.
3:43 - End	5/16	Each instrument becomes independent of each other causing a lot of scatter.

"Don't You Ever Wash That Thing?" Stratification Analysis

Time	Time Signature	Description
0:00 – 0:16	4/4, 3/4, 2/4	Band playing harmonized, unison rhythms – drums fills in between.
0:17 – 0:18	Free	Marimba plays free glissandos
0:18 – 0:20	Free	Drum Set plays free fill
0:21 – 0:24	3/8 – 4/4 –	Horns play exaggerated double time in the

	4/8 – 5/18	style of Sousa.
0:25 – 0:37	7/16, 5/16, 6/16, 4/4, 3/4, 5/8	Trumpet and Marimba play unison solo. Rhythm section plays driving rock beat underneath
0:38 – 0:55	4/4, 3/4, 2/4	Band playing harmonized, unison rhythms – drums fill in between
0:56 – 0:59	4/4	Marimba + Horns
1:00 – 1:01	5/4	Aggressive Drum Fill
1:02 - 1:17	3/4	Lazy Horn playing
1:18 – 1:30	7/16, 5/16, 6/16	Upbeat Trumpet Solo in unison with Keyboard and Marimba
1:31 – 2:39	4/4	Improvised Trombone Solo
2:40 – 2:56	4/4, 3/4, 2/4	Band playing harmonized, unison rhythms – Zappa speaks in between.
2:57 - 2:58	Free	Free Keyboard Fill
2:58 – 2:59	Free	Drum Set plays free fill
3:00 – 3:04	3/8 – 4/4 – 4/8 – 5/18	Horns play exaggerated double time in the style of Sousa.
3:05 – 3:17	7/16, 5/16, 6/16, 4/4, 3/4, 5/8	Trombone and Marimba play unison solo. Rhythm section plays driving rock beat underneath
3:18 – 3:33	4/4, 3/4, 2/4	Band playing harmonized, unison rhythms – percussion instrument fills in between
3:34 – 3:40	4/4	Marimba + Trombone + Keyboard
3:41 – 3:42	5/4	Aggressive Drum Fill
3:43 – 3:56	3/4	Lazy Horn playing + very heavy dissonant chords
3:57 – 4:10	7/16, 5/16, 6/16	Upbeat Trombone Solo in unison with Keyboard and Marimba
4:11 – 5:22	4/4	Improvised Keyboard Solo
5:23 – 7:10	4/4	Improvised Drum Solo w/background hits
7:11 – 8:16	4/4	Keyboard establishes new groove with

		synthesizer improvisations
8:16 – 8:23	4/4	Drum Solo with random hits from the band
8:24 – 8:47	Free	Marimba Cadenza
8:48 – 9:12	4/4	Unison Half Time Rhythms
9:13 – 9:25	Free	Guitar Cadenza
End	4/4	Unison band hit on one.

Another example of stratification occurs in the song “RDNZL” from the album *You Can’t Do That On Stage Anymore (Vol. 2)*. In this song, Zappa uses similar instrumental fragments very reminiscent to “Don’t You Ever Wash That Thing?” which ends with a sung doo-wop style song that plays out for the remainder of the song.

Compositional Technique #3: Polymeter

The final compositional technique Zappa borrowed from Stravinsky is polymeter.³ Polymeter is described as two or more time signatures occurring simultaneously within a piece of music. Stravinsky incorporated this in much of his ballet music including “Procession of the Oldest and Wisest One” from “The Rite of Spring.”

One great example of polymeter in Zappa’s music comes from the song “Toad of the Short Forest” from the album *Weasles Ripped My Flesh*. The song was recorded in the studio while the polymeter section was recorded live and then later placed in the studio version.⁴ As the polymeter section begins to take place on the recording, Zappa explains to the audience what exactly they are hearing:

³ Clement, Brett. "A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa". Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2009: 44.

⁴ Clement, Brett. "A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa". Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2009: 44.

“At this very moment on stage, we have...Drummer A playing in 7/8...Drummer B playing in 3/4...the Bass playing in 3/4...the Organ playing in 5/8...the Tambourine playing in 3/4...and the Alto Sax, blowing his nose.”⁵

Example 3: “Toads of the Short Forest” Transcribed by John Anthony and Ed Davis.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Toads of the Short Forest" by Frank Zappa. The score is arranged for five instruments: Tambourine, Electric Organ, Bass Guitar, Drummer A, and Drummer B. The music is in 3/4 time. The Tambourine part is in 3/4. The Electric Organ part is in 5/8. The Bass Guitar part is in 7/8. Drummer A is in 7/8 and Drummer B is in 3/4. The Alto Saxophone part is labeled "Random 'Nose Blowing'" and consists of a series of notes on a single pitch. The score is titled "Toads of the Short Forest" and "Zappa".

Even though Zappa explains that the organ is playing in 5/8 and drummer B is playing in 7/8, both musicians are actual feeling those time signatures while playing in 3/4 to create the illusion of the polymeter. When polymeter is incorporated into songs, often the meters eventually will line-up every four bars, eight bars, etc. With this recording, the 5/8 lines up with the 3/4 at the beginning of every six measures while the 7/8 lines up with the 3/4 at beginning of every eight bars. Because both the 7/8 and 5/8 don't line up at the same time, the listener is given the sense of uneasiness throughout the entire section. This uneasiness is a great contrast for the song especially since the studio portion of the song is a waltz-like pop tune.

⁵ Zappa, Frank. “Toad of the Short Forest.” *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*. Rykodisc, 1970: 2:11 – 30.

With these ideas of musical quotes, isomelism, polymeter, and stratification, there is no doubt that Frank Zappa was influenced by Igor Stravinsky throughout his entire musical career. By putting these ideas into his music, it showed that Zappa was not only paying honor to an important composer that affected his life, but was hoping that other people would start to find a passion for that same music that inspired him. With more and more recordings being distributed posthumously through the Zappa estate, more and more techniques that Zappa borrowed will hopefully start to appear for fans and music theorists to dive in to.

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2. LINGUA FRANKA (PART VII): Do You Do, Or Don't You Don't?

Arjun von Caemmerer

Abide in me, and I in you.

(John 15.4)

I now feel that one of the defining strengths of Zappa's music is its entwinement—inseparable and unsurpassable—with bodily processes, specifically with **SEX**. When I was more young and more monde, and the German blood corpuscles marched with more vigour, regularity, and purity through my veins, this nexus with SEX partially contributed to a short-lived act of Censorship: in a puritanical, misguided, and ultimately futile bid to isolate Zappa's 'pure' music I made a series of cassettes which crudely extracted the vocal element of some of the songs, preserving only the instrumental parts. [But **We Are Not Alone**: many years later I discovered that a friend and fellow Zappaphile had independently done this, though his professed reasons were different.] I made these Chop a Line excisions partly so that I could play Zappa's music unabashedly in public, unencumbered of the discomfiture of feeling the need to defend my taste (I have only partially expunged the painful memory of a birthday party where I treated the assembly line of guests to the first disc of my new 3 LP set of **Thing-Fish** without having listened to the album first—I had been saving it. Nobody danced and my Romance un-Advanced). But to be honest it was also at least as much because particular items implicated me, by proxy and elsewhere, in a kind of guilty pleasure. The specific trigger for making these tapes was the **Live in New York's** version of **The Illinois Enema Bandit**: after the insinuating round of the terminal recitative (*It must be just what they all need*) had ear-wormed its way into my brain, I found myself experiencing cognitive dissonance in the midst of all this Assonance, mindlessly singing these lines along with 'the Bandit'.

So what changed my rubber mind? Partly it simply got too difficult – this was, after all, the time of records and cassette tapes. But also, almost as if anticipating and then subverting such maneuvers beforehand, Zappa's albums had the 'music music' inconveniently embedded, like an inextractable

gem, either in the muck of the body of the offending song (***Punky's Whips***), or within the song's title (***I Promise Not To Come In Your Mouth***), and what was especially vexing was that these were pieces where the humour and the music (another of Zappa's inseparable couplings) outweighed clearly and completely the tiny and unconvincing Voice of my Conscience. And some albums just stumped me: they defied categorization, such as **Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar**, an album that promised 'pure' instrumental music but did not deliver merely this. Paradoxically, the music on this album seems to gain an extra level of embodiment because of, not in spite of, the sandwiched vocalese. But what finally unhinged my Puritanism, where I succumbed wholeheartedly to Zappa's leering spell of sex and humour and religious experience, was as a result of close listening through headphones to the entrancing lines that spill immortal from **Sheik Yerbouti**:

I have been in you, baby

And you

Have been in me

And we

Have been

So intimately

Entwined

And it sure was fine

I have been in you, baby

And you

Have been in me

And so you see

We have be so together

I thought that we would never

Return from forever

Return from forever

Return from forever...

In its surface meaning this is simply a pointed rebuke to Peter Frampton's **I'm In You**. But lest we forget, Zappa was also thoroughly familiar with the multi-coloured Entertainments of the Bible (the Gideon and the Finnian), and it is impossible not see the intended perversion and reference to the line from John 14.5 quoted above (the clincher is 'entwined'—the chapter is called **The Vine and Its Branches**). This is at least as potent an infiltration of the establishment as the imaginary music, the virgin birth, begat from Joe's and Mary's (yes, the girl on the camel) frolic and cavortment. Further, these seemingly innocent and disposable and lightweight lines describe not only the embodied experience of immersive listening to Zappa, but more generally the consummation of the relationship, the multiplicitous gratifications—oral & aural, orificial & digital—between Musical Consort and all those she ministers to.

SEX, unwise and otherwise, is not separate—cannot be separated—from Zappa's MUSIC. As Zappa oft quoth, "MUSIC IS MY RELIGION", so SEX and MUSIC and RELIGION are also inseparable. Hence Zappa's repeated references to the holes in the fundament (**Jim and Tammy's Upper Room; Jesus Thinks You're A Jerk**), and hence too a little **Ars Poetica**, a sextet, to bring this camel ride, its humps & bumps, to a thrilling conclusion.

Is There Really No Lust In Jazz?

for Ike ("Da Masked Man") Willis

On The Sofa

(A RetroGrade Ejaculation)

Spoo !!!

Jazz from He

Oops...

Didja Get Any Onya?

Quilty Pleasures

for (peeping) Tommy Mars

Emily James' Quilt

*on man in muff on man in muff on man
muff in man on muff in man on muff in
in man on muff in man on muff in man
man on muff in man on muff in man on
on man in muff on man in muff on man
muff in man on muff in man on muff in
in man on muff in man on muff in man*

Sleep Dirt

for Francesco Zappa and Lady Aurora

Does Rumore Belong in Music?

h e a r t b e a t

Father, I've A Confession To Make

for Father Dillee (& Co)

AnoDyne[™]

poo  F!

[™]© The Unguent Anointment Circle

Innuendo

for **bb; pp**

A PenChant for Double Entendre

Butt Hi
Sex
Act

In
GRime
End Sits

CatHoliCC
Our
Seatt

He
End
(Full Stop)

Oft His
TuRgid
P
Rose.

"But this exacting rime ends its Catholic course at the end (full stop) of this turgid prose."

3. 'MAY YOU NEVER HEAR DINAH-MOE HUMM AGAIN': Frank Zappa and the setlist

Sean Gaffney

As I listen to Zappa concerts, one of the things I often wonder about is how Frank went about creating a setlist for a show – or for a tour. There are several things that had to go into it. New songs that he was trying out; songs from newer albums that were the closest he really got to 'hits'; songs he was using with this particular band because they played them well or showed some other aspect of the song; and the ever popular 'crowd favorites'. It's interesting to listen to the progression of Frank's shows over the years – from a loose, mostly improvised setlist with lots of covers and a few 'hits' in the 1960s, to the regimented same-set-every-night bands of the mid-late 70s, right back to the 1988 tour, which again relied on a larger repertoire with lots of covers and some (controlled) improvisation.

By 1988, I think that Frank had started to produce a setlist that took into account (especially in Europe) that he had a large number of fans that would be going to more than one show, and thus would want to hear something 'totally different from the last show'. Having the largest number of potential songs available to him helped, of course, but this band was especially good at segueing from any number to any other number, rather than relying on the fact that, say, City of Tiny Lites would always be followed by Pound for a Brown. Of course, even then the listener risks over-familiarity – too many 1988 shows in a row and you start to really get bored with the Texas Motel, not to mention Stairway to Heaven.

But if the 1988 tour sometimes has 'overplayed' songs, what does this mean for a tour like 1977 or 1979, which utilized the same setlist for almost every single tour? It's not necessarily worse, and this is where the strength of the band comes into play, as well as Frank creating a particularly solid setlist that doesn't NEED to be changed up all the time. Let's take a look at the typical setlist for Fall 1977:

Purple Lagoon Intro, Peaches En Regalia, The Torture Never Stops, Tryin' To Grow A Chin, City Of Tiny Lites, Pound For A Brown, Bobby Brown, Conehead (instrumental), Flakes, Big Leg Emma, Envelopes, Disco Boy, I Promise Not To Come In Your Mouth, Wild Love, Titties 'n Beer, Black Page #2, Jones Crusher, Broken Hearts Are For Assholes, Punky's Whips, Dinah-Moe Humm, Camarillo Brillo, Muffin Man, San Ber'dino

Familiarity with Sheik Yerbouti today distracts from the fact that much of this was (to the casual audience) new material. The 'hits' in the show consisted of Peaches, Torture, Disco Boy, Titties 'n Beer, Punky's Whips, and the four encores. More knowledgeable fans would also have Pound for a Brown and Big Leg Emma. That leaves 11 new songs – a perfect 50-50 balance between old and 'new' material (I use new in quotes as a few of these songs, such as Tryin' to Grow a Chin, were a number of tours old – as Terry Bozzio himself notes on the Sheik Yerbouti album).

This isn't a prolific tour for Frank's guitar solos – there's only six vehicles in the above list – but two of them contain some of his best ever soloing. Torture by 1977 and 1978 was the early highlight of any concert tape, with extended, building to a climax composition from Frank. And Wild Love was not only the big solo vehicle for many of the others in the band – including the other guitarist, Adrian Belew – but usually ended with a Zappa solo that became known as 'The Squirm'. It also contained Punky's Whips, which gave Frank the opportunity to have a more 'rock and roll' sounding solo.

As for lyrical content, well, it is mid-70s Frank. How much you skip the vocal songs will depend on how much you a) don't mind that there's not an outstanding Ray White or Ike Willis type vocalist in the band, or b) don't mind Frank's songs associated with sex and stupidity. And even then, for every Titties' n Beer or Bobby Brown there's a Black Page or experimental proto-Conehead around the corner. The setlist shows off the strengths of the band,

demonstrates what Frank has been writing lately, and manages to disguise the fact that the band, if asked, really couldn't play too much else on this tour – with the exception of a few shows around Halloween, and some spontaneous Enema Bandits, what you had played was what you got.

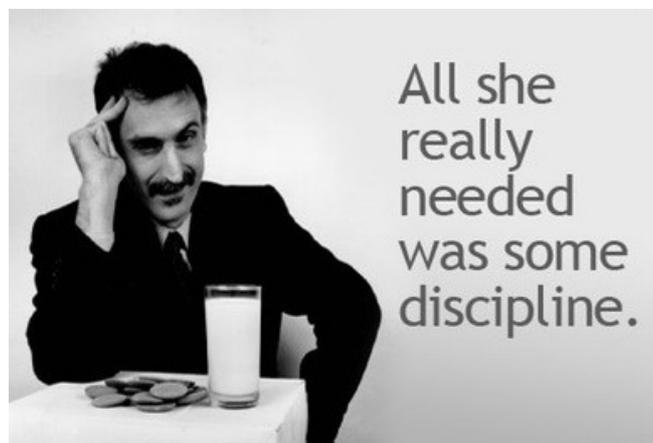
There was also on occasion a third type of band that would alternate between an 'early' and 'late' setlist, with the late one usually being about 20 minutes longer. The 1974 and 1980 bands are the best examples of this. It rewarded local fans who had bought tickets to both shows, but also meant that both shows were usually a bit shorter than normal as – once again – the touring band could only rehearse so much. So in 1974, someone at the early show would marvel at Inca Roads, Florentine Pogen, and the Orange County/Trouble Every Day encore, while someone at the late show would be amazed at a 35-40 minute long Dupree's Paradise excursion and the amazing musician chops required to pull off Echidna's Arf (Of You). And those who paid for both shows got their money's worth.

1982 is another fascinating setlist year for me. Rather than a specific setlist, or an early/late show variation, Frank had little 'mini-sets' of two to five songs that he would then rearrange in any order he wanted through the tour. So you could get a show where Cocaine Decisions/Nig Biz started things off, Or it could be in the middle. Doreen/Goblin Girl/Black Page was a popular main set closer, but not always. And you never knew where Tinseltown Rebellion/Approximate/Cosmik Debris would pop up. To a lesser extent we'd seen this before and since – Frank liked to run sequences of songs – but it was even more obvious on the 1982 tour, leading to the brain never getting bored.

The reason people keep coming back to the shows, of course, is that they do reward repeated listens. Every hardcore Zappa fan listens to the same tours over and over again. Sometimes it's to hear rarities that never made it onto an album, such as Portuguese Lunar Landing from the start of the Bongo Fury Tour. Or proto-versions of songs that would become radically different, like

the early Florentine Pogen and Andy. Sometimes it's to simply listen to Frank play guitar forever and ever (mid-70s Black Napkins is good for this). And even the 1984 band, which has polarized many fans and is admittedly not one of my favorites has its high points – Carol You Fool is fantastic, and some of the Secret Words on the tour leave me in hysterics – "her teeth looked like corn" actually made Honey, Don't You Want A Man Like Me? briefly entertaining in Des Moines. And advanced Zappologists enjoy findings songs in other songs – hearing Mo's Vacation teased in various bass solos while the band was learning it, or the same section used in both Wild Love and Sinister Footwear II. Or even counting the number of times Scott Thunes starts stubbornly playing 'My Sharona' on the bass – usually to the benefit of the song behind it.

I'm not sure any fan could come up with an 'ideal setlist', because it would require an ideal band – you'd want George Duke, Napoleon and Ruth for Inca Roads or Montana, Patrick O'Hearn and Adrian Belew for Flakes and Wild Love, Steve Vai and Ed Mann for Sinister Footwear II and Drowning Witch, and the 1988 band for King Kong and Republican-bashing. That doesn't mean it's not fun imagining one, however. Heck, throw in Flo & Eddie – the idea of the 1988 band plus F&E doing a 50-minute Billy the Mountain with full horns in Rotterdam makes the mind reel. For the most part, however, we can do this because Frank's setlists were such a strength – he knew his bands, knew what they played well and what they didn't, knew how much 'new material' the audience would tolerate, and knew when it was time to roll out Dinah-Moe Humm.



4. DON'T JUBILEE'VE IT

Ken May

Those of us in the UK have just been treated to a disgusting spectacle of national degradation in the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth, a woman whose only claim to the jubilation on display is the fact that she was born between the right pair of legs. I have nothing against her personally – she may be a very nice girl, although from the expression on her face and the conservative company she keeps I very much doubt it – but in an age where we all understand that democracy is still the least worst option for humanity, the presence of a monarch is an affront to everything that civilization has stood for over the last few centuries.

How can it be that the hereditary principle still has any credence at all? When the actual powers of a modern monarch are limited to siphoning off £30 million a year tax-free from the national coffers, and swanning round the world at our expense, there is absolutely no reason why we should be granting them any deference. What have they ever done for us, apart from bring in the tourists? Because we all know that genes have got nothing to do with anything that really matters to what makes us human. Shakespeare is revered for his memes, not his genes. You never hear anything about Mozart's children. Or Einstein's. Intelligence is democratic. You can leave money to your children, but not your ideas. They are the property of anyone prepared to make the effort to understand them.

I am going somewhere with this, of course. A couple of issues back Jim Beugh wrote an article questioning Dweezil's credentials to be regarded as any kind of standard when it comes to playing his father's music. Well, he's not alone in wondering about that. Blood counts for nothing when you don't have the spirit, and despite his obvious respect for his father, he just doesn't get it. He may be a competent enough musician, and have trained his band hard to play difficult music, but he clearly doesn't grasp why it was written and played that way in the first place.

How do I know? Well, I'm a sentient being and an avid consumer of his father's music. I know what I like, and why I like it. Maybe that doesn't count for much. But now I know for sure it's not just me. That recent interview with Napoleon Murphy Brock on the Grateful Web said it all. *"Dweezil is nothing like Frank. It's hard for me to even believe that he is his son."* Ouch. But I know what he means. And here's the killer part: *"If I were the son of Frank Zappa, I'd have been following him around like a roll of toilet paper. You know what I'm saying? Everything he shit, I would have picked it up, and learned about it. He never did that; he never even wanted Frank to show him how to play guitar... He doesn't understand the concept of the music – not really... He thinks it should be played exactly the way it is on the record."*

In other words, he has a tribute band mentality. Nothing wrong with that, in itself. But I would go so far as to say that the WHOLE point of his father's music was to get away from such blinkered thinking. In everything he played, said or did, Frank Zappa actively resisted "playing exactly the way it is on the record." There was always some variation, some twist, to jolt you into thinking about what you were experiencing. The ultimately unused title *Crush All Boxes* says it all. It could be his motto. Ringing the changes was about keeping things alive, entertaining and stimulating, making the music relevant. And yet Dweezil has the nerve to call Napoleon out about *"singing the wrong words."* It's Jesus and the Church all over again. A charismatic leader is succeeded by plodding drones who cover their lack of understanding by establishing a doctrine, a scripture, a tradition that must never be broken. Just like the monarchy.

Back when they started, and brother Ahmet was going to be in the band, the ZFT were even boasting about their 'heir-tight' performances. *Hardy-har.* Google 'heir-tight' and you'll find it's a term that's much beloved of the likes of inheritance lawyers, which is what this is essentially all about. But Frank's legacy is not for sale or control by those not worthy to disseminate it. His fans love him for his ideas, his style, his gorgeously inventive music, "the gift that

goes on giving.” That’s a gift that belongs to everyone, just like the work of all the other geniuses who have opened doors in the mind for the rest of us. I understand his family’s need to make a living for themselves. But as for giving themselves airs or claiming special privileges: *Forget it*. They may enjoy the right to royalties on Frank’s intellectual property to the extent that the law of copyright pertains, but unless proved otherwise by their attitudes and actions, that is the only form of royalty they will ever deserve to aspire to.



5. BONGO ZAPPA: Part One



Steve Moore

<http://www.razorsband.com>

Well, it really didn't start with bongos, but rather a rented snare drum. When 12-year-old Frank's parents couldn't keep up the rental payments, Frank took to beating flams and paradiddles on the furniture. Musicians call this "keeping time."

"My idea of a good time is a really simple-minded song followed by something that is out to lunch, and then back to simplicity again, and then out to lunch again," Frank once told *Guitar Player* magazine. "That's the way the world really is: It's not totally complex, and it's not totally simple. It's a combination of both. I like to have a *bonk, bonk, bonk* track with complicated things going on above it, and vice versa: a complicated track with really simple, long-tone melodies going on above it. It makes for the variety that keeps the interest going...you need to have a clue for the audience to start from before they can understand how fantastic the other stuff is. If there's no basic time, if there's no basic pulse where the audience can sense a foundation of some sort, then I don't think the piece works as well." (*Guitar Player* 1994)

The first public glimpse of drummer Frank came after his family moved west, eventually settling in Lancaster, CA, and he landed as drummer for his high school marching band. In 1993 he told Pulse records magazine:

"I had no outlet in music then to express my discontent. So my aggravations with the way things were festered throughout my high-school years. The only reason I got training as a musician was because the school needed a marching band at its football games. We had to sit in the freezing cold and wear these dorky maroon-and-gray uniforms and play every time our team scored a touchdown. So, during a break, I went under the bleachers for a smoke. I got caught and I was out of there. Not just for smoking, but for smoking in uniform."

Crushing out another Winston, the young drummer asked himself "How can I take any of this seriously?" (To put a finer point on this, here's the Georgia Southern College Marching Band performing a 1980's Frank Zappa Percussion Feature: http://youtu.be/KzruQcRo_8o)

Imagine the surreal contrast between Frank's drumming in the marching band and in his own mind. Frank had read an article in LOOK magazine on music mogul Sam Goody. Sam touted his chain stores' ability to well stock the shelves with the widest variety of music, even an LP as "obscure as 'The Complete Works of Edgar Varèse.' The LOOK writer went on to pejoratively describe Varèse's percussion composition "Ionisation" as a "weird jumble of drums and other unpleasant sounds."

Reading that, Boy Zappa *had* to have the record, and after a couple of months he found his prize with Varèse looking like the weird scientist on the cover. Frank had to negotiate the price down because he was short on cash. ("I had never bought an album before," he recalled.) Frank described his first listen in his autobiography, "Our record player was in the corner of the living room where my mother did the ironing. I turned it all the way up. It had sirens and snare drums and bass drums and a lion's roar. When my mother heard what

was coming out of the little record player's speaker, she looked at me like I was out of my fucking mind."

Edgard Varèse's 1929 percussion classic, "Ionisation" was composed for 13 percussionists playing 40 instruments. Varèse defined this music as "organized sound." Drums, cymbals, chimes and keyboards were matched with sirens that came and went. Here it is on You Tube as performed by Amadinda Percussion Group, Mondo Quartet and students of Franz Liszt Academy of Music Budapest (February, 2005): <http://youtu.be/ove6RVGT478>



Zappa subsequently produced and hosted "A Tribute to Edgard Varèse" at the Palladium in New York City in 1981, an event at which Edgard's wife, Louise, was honored guest.

Frank went drummer pro in 1956 – first in "The Ramblers" band for two gigs. Here's where the bongos come in, only it was pots and pans that

Frank played between his knees waiting for his first set of drums to arrive. His parents got them used for \$50, or \$365 in today's dollars. Next band was an integrated local R&B group, "The Black Outs" which included Euclid James "Motorhead" Sherwood. ("Village of The Sun" is the nostalgic look back on this band)

Frank's former noodling on his younger brother's f-hole acoustic guitar, trying to copy horn and guitar solos on his favorite blues and jazz records, started to seriously take off around this time. And he was always trying to write classical music from High School on.

Very fortunately, in 1965, Ray Collins asked him to take over as the guitarist in local R&B band The Soul Giants. The band renamed itself "The Mothers" on

Mothers' Day, and Bob Dylan's producer, Tom Wilson signed them to a recording contract with Verve records. Hello "Freak Out."

This is where I remotely joined the scene. I bought this album at age 12 on looks alone at my local Montgomery Wards department store, or "Monkey Wards" as we called it. I loved the intriguing cover. Mothers' manager, Herb Cohen asks "What the hell you gonna do with all those drums at 1:00 in the morning?" How exotic that anyone could practice on a ton of drums in the middle of the night. You'd never find that in my neighborhood.

The Mothers offered this young Washington, DC boy a brave, new world of music that was funny as hell, and out of control. "Freak Out" was my "Ionisation." I forced it on everyone, and if you liked it, you were automatically cool. I made my own mother listen, and she laughed. "They sound like "Spike Jones" she told me. (Spike *who?*).

She pulled out her Spike Jones records from a closet. I never knew she had them. Turns out that Spike Jones was "musician and bandleader specializing in performing satirical arrangements of popular songs. Ballads and classical works receiving the Jones treatment would be punctuated with gunshots, whistles, cowbells, and outlandish vocals." *Spike started as a drummer at age 11.* He was also a lifelong smoker, and once said that he got through the workday on coffee and cigarettes. He died at age 53, one year older than Frank.

For this article, I recently pulled up a You Tube video of Spike lampooning "Riders in the Sky." Jimmy Carl Black's voice and attitude would have fit in here perfectly. (http://youtu.be/E_it7JtEYA)

I had the pleasure and advantage of getting to know Jimmy Carl in his later years in Germany, and published some interviews we did online. (<http://www.stevemoore.addr.com/zappa2.html>). I once asked him if he thought Frank Zappa was a genius. Jimmy laughed and said:

“Frank was the BOSS. There were no arguments about music because if you did, he would show you where the door was. Period. In those days, I thought Einstein was the only genius around. Hell, man, I`m from Texas and the only thing we had down there was “Good Ol’ Boys. Since then, I have come to believe that he really was a musical genius.”

Musical genius - *and drummer.*



6. THE APPLIANCE OF SCIENCE?

Sheila Nye

If you ever wondered, as I did, what happened to that quilt made out of 'articles of feminine underclothing' that Frank Zappa collected while on tour in 1980, the good news is that it is apparently still out there, displayed "in a prominent spot" in the lobby of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Biloxi, Mississippi. If you can bear the thought.



For those who would like to examine it in detail, there is even a webpage dedicated to providing close-up images: <http://www.jemz.com/musc/fz/fz.html>

Gross though the idea is at first blush, you don't need to know too much about Zappa to realize that it's entirely typical of the man that he would do such a

thing, to turn the anthropologist on a social phenomenon and both celebrate and satirize it in equal measure. Though he had a well-known and unrepentant predilection for 'erotic activities', he also had a very sharp awareness that sex was 'ridiculous' when viewed objectively, and the idea that women would be willing to debase themselves for the sake of mere crooners such as Elvis Presley and Tom Jones (who still gets knickers thrown at him at the age of 70! Creepy! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZMAv-snlvU>) was something he obviously found hilarious.

But then, Frank was always the scientist. In part, it was the nerd in him, the boy who liked chemistry and wanted to make things explode. It's a shame that science gets a such bad rap, though. Especially when you consider the alternative. It's the curiosity of wanting to know the truth about things that drove Zappa's interest in almost everything, from sex to finding Higgs' Boson. But he had a healthy disregard for scientific certainty too. I always loved what he wrote about it in *Them or Us (The Book)*: *Even without suggesting that all human knowledge be rethought, we ought to at least consider the possibility that centuries of accumulated errors, misjudgments, inaccurate observations, erroneous evaluations of data etc could have emulsified into the Cretin's Porridge now being served up as the HOLY SOFTWARE SNACK-PACK we refer to as 'OUR BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN ALL THINGS SCIENTIFIC'.*

Emily Alana James, the artist who actually made the quilt at Zappa's request to deal with the increasing pile of underwear accumulating after the shows, revealed in an interview that she had needed to stuff the panties along the border of the quilt with card to give them shape, and to amuse herself got various random people around her at the time to write a message for posterity on a piece of card, which would then be stuffed inside panties and hidden from view. One of the people she got to do this was Frank himself, although his card got put aside and nearly didn't get used. Only at the last minute as she was finishing the quilt did she find it as she was looking for extra card to use, and saw the one-word message he had written on it: "SCIENCE".

7. INSIDE NOW

Simon Prentis

OK, so I finally figured it out. The track Zappa labelled *Outside Now (Original Solo)* on Guitar (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtXWLqOVdSg>) is not the original solo at all. The track released as *Outside Now* on Joe's Garage had been emerging in embryonic form as a solo from *City of Tiny Lights* over the days and weeks prior to its actual recording on 31 March, 1979, and the 'original' solo subsequently released on Guitar is a different version which he in fact used (in a slightly edited form) for the xenochronous solo section on *Keep It Greasey*. Got that?

I only know because my son recently took a liking to the *Outside Now (Original Solo)*, and when listening to it more carefully while trying to explain to him that it was used to construct *Outside Now* on Joe's Garage, I discovered that although they bear a close family resemblance, they aren't the same at all. It turns out (according to the fantastically detailed research on the *Information Is Not Knowledge* website – <http://globalia.net/donlope/fz/index.html> just in case anyone doesn't know) that the solo used for *Outside Now* on the Joe's Garage album is actually taken from an earlier show that same day. It must have been a good night.

When you listen to *Outside Now (Original Solo)* and the solo from *Keep It Greasey* back to back, their identity immediately becomes clear, but I'd never thought of comparing them directly because they seem so different. For just in the same way as a comparison of *Occam's Razor* and *Toad-O-Line* (aka *On The Bus*) shows how incredibly different the solo sounds with a different backdrop, so the hyperactive harmonic climate underlying the *Keep It Greasey* solo turns it into a completely different animal. I've heard the *Keep It Greasey* solo so many times, always marvelling at the astonishing tension between the laconic grace of the solo and the frenetic outburst of the backing track (if you want a fresh insight into the awesome complexity of the drum rhythms with their distinctive 19/16 and 21/16 measures, check this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6uXANvaK1I>) that at first it was quite a disappointment to hear it in its original context. Just like *Occam's Razor*, it can seem flat and lacklustre without the enhanced backdrop. But grow a new pair of ears, and things can seem different. My son, who'd never heard the *Keep It Greasey* version, much prefers the original – and it's certainly true that it opens up the more reflective, thoughtful qualities that get squeezed hard by the relentless pace of the Joe's Garage context.

Not that there ever is, strictly speaking, an original. Zappa has spoken at length about how soloing was 'instant composition', each solo being a conversation, a dynamic dialogue with the band and everything else that was happening that day, even if the solo seems to build around a familiar topic or theme. Those not lucky enough to have been able to observe for themselves how this worked in successive live concerts have the SUAPYG series to refer to, where the title track and its variants seem to grow in intensity as they progress through the 'original' *SUAPYG*, to *SUAPYG Some More*, and then *Return of the Son of SUAPYG*.

So it's instructive to learn, again courtesy the IINK website, that these solos were not recorded in sequence, though they were performed over the same three days (17-19 February, 1979). In fact, *SUAPYG Some More* was recorded first, then *SUAPYG*, and then *Return of the Son of SUAPYG*. Not only that, quite different versions of 'the same' solo exist in parallel: *Gee I Like Your Pants* was even recorded on the same day as *SUAPYG*, and within ten days mutated into *Systems of Edges*, released much later on *Guitar. Toad-O-Line / Occam's Razor* emerges from that same period, as do *Treacherous Cretins* and *Gorgeous Inca* – all as the solo slot from *Inca Roads*.

To a certain extent, it's the title that fools you. Even though *Them Or Us* is one of my favourite solos, I hadn't realized until recently that *Do Not Try This At Home*, *Move It Or Park It* and *Which One Is It?* are essentially variations of the same *Black Page* solo slot, all recorded within two weeks of each other in 1982. Does it matter? Well, in one sense it's reassuring. The monstrous

creativity of the output macrostructure seems to be a little more understandable when you see it as clever variations on a theme, an economy of means that delivers maximal effect from limited constituent parts. But it still doesn't detract from a comment I saw recently on YouTube, with which I can't help sympathizing: *"I have come to the conclusion that Frank Zappa wasn't human. Only a being from some distant galaxy could create music this incredible."* In the continued and sadly lamentable absence of any serious competition, it's hard not to agree.

OUTSIDE NOW

Transcribed by
Steve Vai

by Frank Zappa

♩=138 VAMP B7maj7 C

♩=139 (Rhythm section continues vamp)
Guitar solo

Drums

CR X

ff

f

ppp

f

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8. BEN WATSON RUINED MY LIFE: Confessions of a Zappaholic

John A. Riley

In the nineties I was your typical small town British teenager, wallpapering his life with rock music and harbouring indistinct but heartfelt dreams of rebellion, not detecting the suspicious whiff that such urges are, in themselves, a somewhat conservative notion. Then one night BBC 2 screened a documentary on Captain Beefheart. I had never seen or heard anything like it before.

Matt Groening, creator of **The Simpsons**, related his experience of buying **Trout Mask Replica** (because it had Frank Zappa's name on it) and finding it unlistenable. Something about the contrariness of this idea of unlistenable music (and the ringing endorsement from the creator of my favourite TV show) appealed, and I followed suit. Groening was right; it WAS unlistenable, mostly. But it had INCREDIBLE vocals and a brilliantly anarchic sense of humour. From then on I started buying Zappa albums, and had soon (mostly) left the world of teenage-problem music behind me. The transition wasn't as smooth as it might have been.

Now an A Level student (I think this roughly translates to high school senior, in American parlance) I was studying literature, media and philosophy and had a profound desire to learn tempered only by the fact that I was a zealous, top-down, opinionated teenage monster. Then there was this book, with a fruity pink cover, and a promise to discuss Zappa in terms of "negative dialectics." I didn't know what that meant, and frankly I still don't. But Ben Watson's book changed my life. I'm sure Mr Watson would love to hear that I became a card-carrying member of the SWP, but I didn't. I went along to a couple of socialist meetings while a university student, and found them maddening. On leaving one such meeting, I was ambushed by a pack of self proclaimed "Norwich Anarchists" - Another disaffected attendee launched into a near-hysterical diatribe against them and their ideology and I scurried away, never to return. I

always preferred the commonsense approach of Clem the Gem and old Labour to the hectoring and browbeating of the SWP.

Politics aside, Watson's book profoundly affected me. For one thing, I love the way Watson's book is written - the enthusiasm is palpable on every page. I don't agree with all his insights, but hell, I agree with many of them, and the ones I don't like are still fascinating. The relentless burrowing into the details of Zappa's work (from the luminous description of the music itself to the poring over of album cover minutiae) and the eclecticism, the willingness to bring in anything from Jacques Attali to JH Prynne if it helps enhance a point impressed me.

Creation myths are powerful things; I've touched on the idea of the prelapsarian myth before in this very journal. I credit Watson's book with firing something "intellectual" or "academic" within me; I went to university to study film. The first assignment I submitted came back with a comment from my friend and academic mentor Martin Fradley: "references to Frank Zappa are ALWAYS unnecessary." (NB. Memories of this period are hazy, but I think it was a reference to something I'd found in Watson's book that necessitated mention of Zappa).

I was too much of a Walter Mitty figure to apply myself close to my studies; I found myself wandering round the library aimlessly, checking out books like the racially-dubious "Negro Types" (which fed into my morbid fascination with **Thing-Fish**) sexually explicit Henry Miller novels and entering the unsettling (and deeply sad) world of Phillip K Dick; all while I should have been researching and evaluating the vertically integrated business model that constituted the classical Hollywood cinema. Oh, and I formed Norwich's only gangsta rap band with Mike Hutchinson, another Zappa-loving film student, and an accomplished musician. Thanks to **The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play**, I decided to undertake a PhD; a project that applied the thought of Gilles Deleuze (whose writing was dismissed by Watson as "spoiled brat

plaints") to the films of Andrei Tarkovsky. And that's how Ben Watson ruined my life.

Another of Watson's ideas (from his contribution to **Academy Zappa**) has haunted me more recently; He begins one of his essays with an anecdote about his friend Danny Houston. If at first it seems like "cider with roadies" territory, a mere description of Watson and Houston's youthful hijinks and drunken antics together, it soon becomes clear that this is to illustrate a very good point; it was the way that Houston used Zappa that was important; swapping tapes, popping his phone number into the sleeves of Zappa records, *creating* situations - "the point for him was using culture rather than simply consuming it," Watson concludes.

That's why I – I think – I got so deeply into Zappa, because his music, despite being dismissed by so many friends and acquaintances as novelty music or impenetrable guitar wanking, because it seemed like it was doing more than just skimming the surface.

I remember distinctly reading Watson quoting Zappa on "lifestyle wallpaper" and, though of course the words are Zappa's, practically punching the air with the delight of seeing a nascent unformed idea deep at the bottom of my murky, indistinct consciousness, expressed with perfect clarity:

"If you're into heavy metal, you go for that kind of audio wallpaper and all it does is reinforce your idea of who you think you are."

That was ME a couple of years ago, I thought to myself, with a sense of smug superiority. Watson's whole book seemed charged with this idea. But fast-forward to 2012; I listen to music on my own, rarely even discuss it with others. I don't have the confidence or mental stamina required to make music myself anymore. I post videos of music that I like to facebook (the social network for the socially inept) which - of course - nobody listens to.

Maybe I just don't know how to use it properly, but it seems like the whole web 2.0 isolates us in our own micro-tastes, despite the emphasis on "sharing." The idea that you might be exposed to new music outside your comfort zone has gone, you just plug in your mp3 player and cocoon yourself in your chosen sound-world, rely on loathsome web tastemakers to tell you what to listen to.

How did I become such a shadow of my former self? And how did I exchange a belief in the critical power of music with a grim, resigned solipsism. Was it something to do with the (I shudder at even describing it this way) London gig circuit? Cram as many bands on the bill as possible, without regard for any kind of musical compatibility. Deafen everybody. Get them to drink and go home. It's either that or some glorified youth club for hipsters.

Or was it the years of working as a VT Operator in the service of rancid Sony BMG? In the course of that employment I saw countless inane music videos, and insipid interviews replayed endlessly. Close-up, the profligate waste and bull-headed carelessness of record executives smacked of cocaine decisions. I saw footage of a heavy metal vocalist boxing his own dog (in graphic close-up), a clip of a world famous popera act so bored that they'd taken to smirking "heil Hitler" at each other while recording video links. My personal favourite, though, is singer Natasha Beddingfield giving a cliché-ridden speech on how you should believe in yourself and be individual, be real *etc ad nauseum*, only for a central scrutiniser-like voice from off-camera asking her to start again, this time with more feeling, which our Natasha obligingly did.

Academia too, stifles creativity and instead offers a hermetically sealed circle of revered figures, endlessly re-quoted but with the distinct after-impression that everyone's familiarity with these *cognoscenti* is actually cursory at best.

In contrast to this intellectual brittleness, isn't there something joyous in Zappa's uniting of Varese and Stravinsky's listeners with titty-squeezing beer-

drinking party-rock fans? Isn't this the xenochrony Zappa practiced in his music, extended to a social sculpture in the form of his own audience?

But I've been complaining too long, engaging in exactly the sort of bruised self-pity that Zappa's music engages in countless provocations to ridicule (from "Broken Hearts are For Assholes" to the utterly direct crassness of "Suicide Chump"?). It's highly likely that I've completely misunderstood Watson's entire point too. But to underline that the predicament I've outlined is one of my own making, I'll end by quoting Zappa himself:

"If you end up with a boring miserable life because you listened to your mom, your dad, your teacher, your priest, or some guy on television telling you how to do your shit, then you deserve it."

