

THE RONDO HATTON REPORT VOL IV, SEPTEMBER 21, 2010

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* Note that items **3**, **5** and **7** are English translations.

The original texts can be found in **9: ONE MORE TIME FOR THE WORLD**

1. DON'T MESS WITH MAGDALENA

by Matt AKU

The other day as I was idly browsing through the comments on Amazon about Kelly Fisher Lowe's book 'The Words and Music of Frank Zappa', I was astonished to find one claiming that some of Zappa's 'filthy' lyrics "came dangerously close to a celebration of paedophilia" (the writer refers specifically to *Brown Shoes Don't Make It* and *Magdalena*). Now obviously some people are deeply offended by Zappa's 'penchant for smut'. I don't agree with them – I think this is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what Zappa was doing – and rather than waste your breath arguing with them, you mostly have to put it down to an overly-sheltered upbringing and walk in the other direction. However, if this misunderstanding is severe enough to lead people to believe that Zappa was celebrating paedophilia, there is a major problem. This is a serious charge, especially given that it is *IN NO WAY* substantiated by the lyrics. Even more surprisingly, the person making the comment is clearly a fan of Zappa's music, giving the book a 5-star review! (though there may be a clue there, however....)

Now it just so happens that *Magdalena* is one of my favourite songs. Whenever I get in a froth about the state of society today, it always has the power to revive me with its irreverent evisceration of all that is cheesy about the world. So if you'll indulge me, I'd like to take a look at it in detail.

First of all, what are the lyrics actually about? It's the story of a man who comes home, finds his wife is out, tries (unsuccessfully) to press sexual advances on his precocious teenage daughter, and then fantasises about what he might do to her 'if only she woulda'. Is this the kind of behaviour we should be celebrating? There will be very few who think so. Does it occur, in actual fact? Probably much more than is widely recognised. Do we do anything about it? Yes, we have laws against it. Does this stop it happening? Not so far. Is the song endorsing this behaviour? I think not.

The man in question is "a little ole man who lived in Montreal." We probably shouldn't hold his Canadian citizenship against him – even though he may be a closet French speaker – but the fact that it is mentioned suggests that the story may be based on some snippet of news that Zappa had heard. Most of his songs were, as we know. [There's a suggestion that it was the true story of a Canadian groupie who came into his

orbit]. But the phrase 'Little ole man' is already a bad start. He's clearly not being set up as a role model. This analysis is only confirmed when he pleads with his daughter to understand his position, asking her if she has "any idea" what working so hard "making maple syrup for the pancakes of the land" can "do to a man" [We should perhaps note, parenthetically, the conceptual link to St Alphonzo and his acolyte Father Vivian O'Blivion, another sad figure indelibly associated with pancakes.]

This is not the approach of a smooth-talking alpha-male seducer. It's a two-bit loser speaking, begging for the sympathy vote. Not an attractive image. Neither is the next verse, which describes the 'little ole man' as 'drooling a bit' as he uses his 'grubby little hand' to 'reach for her tit'. And what is his daughter's response? She tells him to 'Go eat shit!' to which the narrator (ultimately Zappa)'s voice comments "Right on, Magdalena!" It's hard to see how anyone could make a case for the defence. This is a portrait of a man so alienated from himself that he is considering having sex with his own daughter.

Does this happen? Yes. How much does it happen? Probably quite a lot. As a society we may be extremely uncomfortable talking about it, but those who have investigated it seriously believe that as much as a third and even as many as 50% of all women have suffered unwanted sexual attacks at some time in their childhood, with the figure only slightly less for men. Is this a problem? If we believe in the autonomy of the individual and the right not to be coerced in sexual – and other – matters, then yes, it is. So why does it happen? What is going through a person's mind when they think of forcing sex on a child? Because if it does happen, we need to understand it. The second half of the song supplies an answer.

In what can only be described as a masterpiece of sustained stream-of-consciousness sung in sprechstimme, Howard Kaylan checks off an absurd list of cultural clichés and half-digested mis-remembered fantasies that anyone who pays attention to popular culture will recognise as the very stuff of tabloid titillation, ending with "*My God, I was only following the sexual impulse like I heard on the Johnny Carson Show from a book that some guy wrote, I didn't know what I was doing..*"

This is a man who is totally confused, so bamboozled by the trash he's fed himself as a palliative for the emptiness of his life, that he doesn't have any space to think for himself. It's really, really hard to see how this portrait could be read as endorsing a lifestyle.

As to celebrating or encouraging paedophilia, it's like saying that just mentioning the word 'sex' is a perversion, no matter what. It's only possible to maintain that point of view if you're not paying any attention at all to context, but simply suffering a knee-jerk reaction at the mention of the words, a classic sign of repression. If you're looking for juvenile, this kind of thinking is a good place to start.

It seems to have been one of Zappa's missions, through his work, to help exorcise the repression that leads to the kind of sick world portrayed in *Brown Shoes Don't Make It*—another song that is about as far from celebrating paedophilia as it is possible to imagine. Satire, folks. It's called satire. Or am I completely wrong, here? Somebody back me up, please!

2. A NOTE ON PUMPKINS

Corya DEREUTER

Frank Zappa's love of Halloween is well known. For many years (until union business intervened) he used to regularly celebrate the occasion with a big concert in New York, as documented so wonderfully in the movie *Baby Snakes*. What was it about Halloween that he loved so much? The heathen origins of the festival would certainly have chimed with his 'devoutly pagan' beliefs. But perhaps more importantly, there's just something about dressing up in ridiculous costumes that can liberate you from "*outmoded and restricting standards of thinking, dress, and social etiquette in order to express creatively [his] relationship to [his] immediate environment and the social structure as a whole.*" So to hold a concert at Halloween is like licensing a spontaneous Freak-Out.

The symbol of Halloween is, of course, the pumpkin. Now as we all know, a pumpkin is a vegetable, and a very fine vegetable too – great for festive occasions as it can so easily be hollowed out and sculpted into pleasing designs.



It is probably this very pliability which led to it replacing the turnip, the vegetable traditionally used as a Jack o' Lantern during celebrations of Halloween in ancient Celtic societies. And if this pliability is the key, given the sexism of the times it's perhaps not so surprising that it could also be a euphemism for a female sexual partner – as referenced by Zappa himself on the inside cover of the album *Absolutely Free*, where alongside the credits for the band he places the words 'MY PUMPKIN' over a picture of Gail at his left shoulder. OK, so pumpkins are cute too, and not every father who refers to his daughter as 'my pumpkin' is thinking of incest, but the sexual connotations intended here are quite clear from the title of the track '*Invocation and Ritual Dance of the Young Pumpkin*'.

Then there's the *pump-kin's* heavy huffing and puffing at the end of Side 1, culminating in Zappa's mockingly appreciative 'What a pumpkin!' Obviously no shortage of *cries in the night as a result of him stuffing*, then.

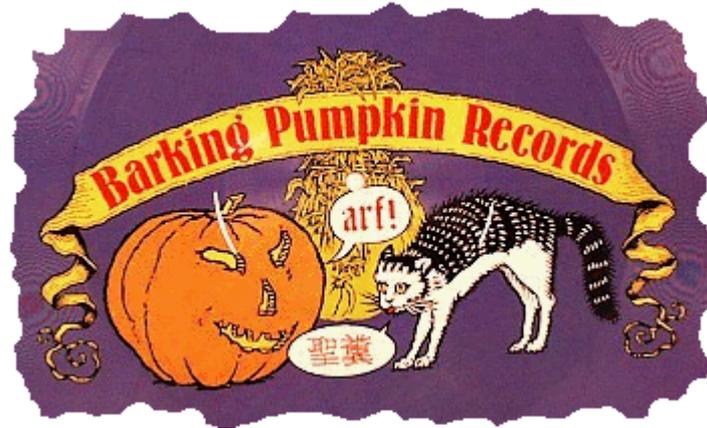
Another major symbol associated with Halloween and pumpkins is witches. One of the first Barking Pumpkin releases was *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch*. It seems to be widely assumed that FZ chose this title (and cover) for the album simply because the Roger Price *Doodle* of that name which had attracted his attention resembled the letters FZ, but there is surely more to it than that. Let's examine what or who the witch might represent.

Consider what happens to her: *Maybe a submarine could save her, and take her home to the Navy...* Home to the Navy? Why would a witch feel comfortable at being taken home to the Navy... unless, perhaps, it was someone who '*hails from a long line of career Naval officers*'... [see, for example: http://www.whale.to/b/inside_the_lc.html]

Consider also her ultimate fate: *For some kind of... ritual sacrifice*. In case there was any doubt that the sacrifice in question is the Rite of Spring (right after the ritual dance), Zappa inserts a thudding *duh-duh-duh-duh* bass line which mimics the excerpt from the Rite already implied in the title of that earlier track from *Absolutely Free*. To reinforce the point, his deliciously lascivious enunciation reveals the true nature of the *oo-oo-oo-ah-ah* 'sacrifice' that is about to ensue...

It would probably be stretching coincidence too far to mention that in an interview with Gail once published somewhere, it mentions that the door to her office at the house in Hollywood Hills '*looks like the door to a submarine*', but we might as well throw that into the mix. Who knows what she got/gets up to in it.

Now let's take another look at the Barking Pumpkin logo.



At the back of the design is a sheaf of corn. Well, of course, Halloween is a harvest festival. But then there's also this. The Barking Pumpkin label was set up to mark the completion of the new studio that Zappa had built at his home which would allow him to 'bring home the harvest' in a much more productive fashion than before. He has publicly acknowledged his debt to Gail in having overseen this project, as well as in having set up a highly successful mail-order merchandise business – which he sardonically dubbed 'Barfko-Swill' even though it delivered significant financial support for his other ventures.

So the pumpkin is intimately associated with the harvest. But on the logo the pumpkin also barks. Zappa has been quoted as saying that it was named after Gail's smoker's cough, but there's a world of difference between a cough and a bark. Barking is an aggressive action aimed at deterrence. A cough is a reflex action to expel mucus. Humans don't bark. Pumpkins don't bark. Dogs do.

Another meaning of the word dog is, of course, an 'unattractive female' – whether due to an unfortunate personal appearance, an unpleasant social demeanor, or both. The word 'witch' can also be used in the same uncomplimentary fashion. The cat is clearly reacting with astonishment to the pumpkin/dog/witch (the face is certainly 'scary-lookin', even if it's not yet 15 feet tall), replying *Holy Shit!* – the traditional response of someone who's just been scared out of his or her wits.

Is it too much to see the 'cat' as Zappa himself, the cool ship who has arrived too late to save the witch who is drowning in her relentless pursuit of 'a *Merchant Marine* who told

her he was really rich', and is thus driven to a lifestyle where, as documented in The Real Frank Zappa Book, "one of the things that makes our relationship work is the fact that we hardly ever get to talk to each other"?

Probably. But it sure was a lot of fun piecing all that together. I hope you enjoy the speculation as much as I did.

3. NARRATIVIUM EXPERIMENT

The Grotchy

I'm French. As such, it has advantages, but there are a few pitfalls, too. The biggest obstacle for me when I first discovered Frank's music, in '76, legendary year of the USA bicentennial, was my inability to understand his words in "real time". My English was only good enough to allow me to translate the lyrics with difficulty, when they appeared on the album. Yet, although the licentious nature of the texts provoked strange guttural sounds in the youth that I was, it was the music first and foremost that conquered my mind, especially Frank's solos, which drew me to a mental voyage that still delights me every time.

I just finished a book that spoke of "Narrativium", the capacity of man to tell stories, which allowed him to control his environment at the dawn of mankind (or at least gave him that illusion ...) with phrases such as "what if", "why" and "because". The brain was the weapon of this species, the dominant organ, developed over time through the power of imagination. Naturally, I thought of the music of Frank, and his guitar which we hope will never stop playing, and the images it imprints in our heads.

For my part, I consider music from two points of view. The first speaks to my belly, low frequency vibrations which vibrate the "pilot" rhythms of my body. The second speaks to my brain, middle and high frequencies of the voice and instruments which sing the melodies that tell me stories. These are the ones that particularly affected me with Frank, right from the first time I heard them. But my musical world is not centred around his work by chance. I have listened to many other artists, with much pleasure, but none have touched me so with their imagination. The richness of his work and the variety of styles immediately attracted me. But not the words, which I barely understood. They really left me to one side. I'm French.

Gradually, my English has improved, I can understand the meaning of the lyrics more and more, but they remain in second place for me. What attracts me most is his solos, which I enjoy for their live intensity. Now I can not live without my dose, causing those close to me to claim "You are boring with your Zappa!". But I must say that I have not found anything better to listen to. Today again, somewhere else...

When he released the "Shut Up..." series, I understood that I am not alone, that others enjoyed his voyages on the guitar. Did the blue note that Miles Davis was looking for decide to take up residence in Frank's solos? Or is it, as with some journeys, not the destination that is relevant, but the road? In any case, for the listener that I am, this road I know so well, which I have so often taken and yet changes with each trip, this road is like a quest for the Holy Grail for me. It speaks to me, telling me different stories every time. I have to constantly go, and yet I do not care one bit where it leads, as long as those blue notes continue to tickle my synapses. I will probably not live long enough to be able to go right round his world, so too bad for me, it's (almost) a hard choice, but I have chosen freedom:

Frank's music is my "Narrativium" – after all, I'm French ...

4. TROUBLE WITH PIGS AND PONIES: Pt. III – Discreet Fakery Andy Hollinden

Frank Zappa often played with the concepts of fakery, cheap prestige, and their interrelationship. Many of his iconic “cheepnis” statements come from the Discreet Era.

Zircon

“I first discovered zircon in 1957. When a pianist in a band I had in high school decided that, in order to really play like Fats Domino, he had to have the same amount of weight on his fingers as Fats did. You know, Fats wore a huge ring with a diamond. Wimberly could not afford a diamond, but he saw an ad in some comic book, which said that you could get a diamond as big as your fist for twenty-five dollars. So to me, zircon always appeared to be a symbol of absolute cheapness.”ⁱ

How much money will you spend in order to appear affluent? What’s at work is not just the concept of zircon fakery but also the phenomenon of diamond desire and status concern. While the budget-bejeweled person may hope to exude an air of glamour and opulence, he is publicly proclaiming his acceptance of society’s belief in a diamond’s intrinsic value. Conversely, a person who feels *all* diamonds are junk for susceptible suckers and crass symbols of bogus pomp has no need for zircon.

The zircon concept can be applied to *anything*, and it is.

*With a pair of heavy-duty zircon-encrusted tweezers in my hand
Every other wrangler would say I’m mighty grandⁱⁱ*

Slap some shiny stuff on anything, and it’s suddenly elegant. This effect can be achieved through various means and is what Frank referred to as “garni du jour.”

If somebody gives you a hamburger on a dish, it means one thing. If somebody gives you a hamburger on a dish with a piece of green stuff and a wrinkled carrot and a radish - even though you don’t eat that stuff - it’s a Deluxe Hamburger. It’s the same piece of dog meat on the inside, but one’s got the garni du jour. Americans have become accustomed to having a garni du jour on everything.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Devil

Before *Overnite Sensation*, Frank introduced zircon in the *Billy the Mountain* movie script:

“Billy the Mountain has a tree growing on his shoulder named Ethel, and Ethel is his girlfriend, who soon becomes his wife, and Ethel the Tree is under the control of Old Zircon, the phased-out Byzantine devil.”^{iv}

Which is fake, this phased-out Byzantine devil or the very concept of a devil itself? “Titties and Beer” gives a clear picture of how Frank viewed *The Devil Concept*.

Terry (as The Devil): *Wait . . . you ain't supposed to wanna make a deal with me.*

FZ: *Ah, but I'm slightly different than your average customer, Devil...*

Terry: *What's your story?*

FZ: *Well, most people are afraid of you, see? They don't know how stupid you are.^v*

Frank saw Satanic fear as a tool of religion to heighten fear, extract blind compliance, and increase collection plate revenues while simultaneously projecting a smoke screen of spiritual evolution.

They can't stand for people to not take them seriously. If you laugh at them for an instant, it's just like--the devil walks in the room, right? And he goes, 'I'm the devil,' and you take a fork and poke him in the belly, and the gas comes out, and he'll go twirling around the room like an unleashed balloon. That's the way these guys are. You can't laugh at them. They hate it, because they're so full of shit, they're so full of themselves that they just can't believe that people don't appreciate them for the grand, highly evolved creatures that they imagine themselves to be...If they weren't so fucking dangerous, it would be fun to laugh at them all the time, but sometimes you have to take into account how much damage they can do.^{vi}

Religion in league with the government uses fear to pass idiotic legislation.

A guy with red skin, horns, a long tail, smells like sulfur, has a pointed stick, you know, makes you go to a place where there's fire, that's superstition, and superstition has no place in legislation. So, if you create something that says we must protect people from the devil, you're saying that the devil's real, and you've got a problem, because the next step is the witchcraft trials.^{vii}

Therefore, Zircon = Devil.

Gurus

"Obviously, a person would have a problem that leads him to seek advice of that nature [from a guru], and he has other problems that lead him to accept that advice and live by it... Today if you have a problem, it is more acceptable to go to some bogus quack with a robe on and some phony mental paraphernalia, than to say you're going to a psychiatrist or psychologist... As far as I'm concerned, it's total nonsense."^{viii}

For Frank, what unites all varieties of spiritual authority figures (priests, gurus, philosophers, etc.) is:

1. Use of costumes

*Father Vivian O'Blivion, resplendent in his frock
Was whipping up the batter for the pancakes of his flock^{ix}*

2. Supernatural hokum

*Look here, brother
Who you jivin' with that Cosmik Debris^x*

3. Greed

*He said for a nominal service charge
I could reach Nirvana tonight
If I was ready, willin , and able
To pay him his regular fee^{xi}*

And as Greggery Peccary proclaimed,

If you ask a philostopher he'll see that you pays!^{xii}

You don't have to be a "real" religious leader to harness costume power.

*You may think my hat is funny, but I don't
I'm the Grand Wazoo
Keeper of the mystic scroll
And roll of parchment from the lodge^{xiii}*

The guy with the biggest, dumbest hat is the Grand Wazoo^{xiv}

Zircon = Spiritual leaders with or without big, dumb hats

Mar-juh-rene

In The Real Frank Zappa Book, Frank talks about how his father "made butter" by mashing a bit of pigment into oleomargarine (the dietary equivalent of Zircon). Evidently, research showed that color - not cost, taste, or texture - was the deciding factor in margarine's acceptance and success as a cheap butter substitute.^{xv}

I like Ben Watson's interpretation of *Apostrophe's* "Yellow Snow" suite as a religious morality play in which Frank spoofs "masturbation is a sin that causes blindness" as an imaginary disease.^{xvi} In short, Mama warns Nanook to not be naughty, he rubs it anyway,

blindness ensues, and the cure is in the Catholic Church. Frank finds the church's curative balm (forgiveness through confession to a priest) to be as phony as margarine. Father O'Blivion is a priest with "filthy habits" (*The night before behind the door a leprechaun had stroked his smock. He was delighted as it stiffened*) whose primary concern is raising money for his parish through pancake sales.

I have not found people of goodwill anywhere in any type of business connected with any religion, nobody worth trusting, nobody who is ever secure enough in their own beliefs that they would trust themselves. I have not known anyone who wasn't willing to sell out for a nickel, and any of them is a potential murderer in terms of either pushing the button themselves for religious or political reasons or some sort of bizarre fantasy they have in their own mind that the way they see things is superior to the way that somebody else sees things. What I'm saying is that is human nature.^{xvii}

Zircon = Margarine = Devil = Religion = (fill-in-the-blank)

The Torture Never Stops

We're surrounded by cheap fakery that causes us to seek status, consume junk, fear damnation, tithe to churches, suffer from guilt-based diseases, and empower politicians who enact superstitious laws. So the question is:

What will you do when the label comes off?^{xviii}

Notes:

- ⁱ FZ - Suplik plny Zappy interview with Petr Doruzka
- ⁱⁱ "Montana," *Overnite Sensation*, 1973
- ⁱⁱⁱ FZ - Garni Du Jour, Lizard King Poetry and Slime by Tim Schneckloth, *Downbeat*, May 18, 1978
- ^{iv} FZ - Zappa's Latest Box Of Tricks, *Sounds*, November, 1971
- ^v "Titties and Beer," *Zappa In New York*, CD version, 1991
- ^{vi} FZ - The Mother of All Interviews by Don Menn, *Zappa!* from the publishers of Keyboard and Guitar Player, p.51
- ^{vii} FZ - Zappa On Censorship, *Society Pages USA #3*, from an interview with J.B. Peterson of KPFK, June 21, 1990
- ^{viii} FZ - He's Only 38 and He Knows How to Nasty by Clark Peterson, *Relix*, Vol. 6 No. 5, Nov. 1979
- ^{ix} "Father O'Blivion," *Apostrophe*, 1974
- ^x "Cosmik Debris," *Apostrophe*, 1974
- ^{xi} *ibid*
- ^{xii} "The Adventures of Greggery Peccary," *Studio Tan*, 1978
- ^{xiii} "The Grand Wazoo," *The Lost Episodes*, 1996
- ^{xiv} FZ - *The Lost Episodes* liner notes, 1996
- ^{xv} For an interesting discussion of margarine and the color psychology behind its public acceptance, see Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* (p. 136-38), a book Frank read and referenced in interviews.
- ^{xvi} Ben Watson, *The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, St. Martin's Press, pp. 255-56
- ^{xvii} FZ - Frank Zappa – Artist As Genetic Design Flaw, *Ecolibrium Interviews #19*, 1985
- ^{xviii} "Who Are The Brain Police?," *Freak Out!*, 1966

5. MEETING THE MAN

Tina IREI

The first time I met Frank Zappa was in the autumn of 1986, when we visited him at his home in Los Angeles.

My husband and I had left Japan the previous April, and after some five months spent travelling through Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Korea and Hawaii had arrived in Los Angeles with the intention of driving across America. We bought a battered old saloon car on the cheap in Los Angeles, drove up to see some friends from Japan in San Francisco, camping in their garden, and returned again to Los Angeles in a loop via Dead Horse Point, the Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert.

We had come back to LA because my husband was keen to meet Frank Zappa again, thinking he could do an interview with him for the Japanese media. He'd interviewed Frank once before, but on that first occasion he'd been very nervous, and partly because he hadn't been very happy with the way the interview went, was determined to meet him one more time. He'd had put a call through to Zappa's office without getting anything set up from Japan, hoping that it might just be possible to arrange a meeting anyway, and had got permission to go and interview him.

Of course, I'd been subjected to Zappa music right from the beginning of our relationship. My husband had put together a cassette tape with selections of music suitable for a "Zappa beginner" and I had dutifully listened to the music as I rode the subway or walked around town, plugged into a Walkman as was the fashion in those days. At the time I was studying French, and had immersed myself in everything French, frequenting French-style cafes that served French food, smoking Gitanes and Gauloise cigarettes, decorating my apartment in a French style and only listened to *chanson* – so to be honest, Zappa's music was pretty hard on my ears at first. However, I soon realised that there was a complexity and sharpness, a severity and at the same time an irrepressible sense of fun in Zappa's music. Unfortunately, my English was not very good at that time, so I had to rely on sleeve notes and translation to understand the albums, and even some 20 years later still have to get help from time to time to fully understand the lyrics.

So when I found myself standing in front of Zappa's house, I was extremely nervous. I'd been warned by my husband that it was Zappa's habit to throw interviewers out after about 10 minutes if he didn't like them, and as I was essentially posing as a photographer so that I could go along with my husband, I was fully aware that he was likely to spot me as a fake at any moment, and chuck us out of the house.

We rang the bell and a woman's voice answered. Once the latch clicked open, I stepped inside with the feeling that my bluff was about to be called. The distance from the entrance to the house seemed to be both way too long and far too short at the same time, but before I'd had time to think about it, there was Frank Zappa standing right in front of us. After he'd greeted my husband who was walking ahead of me, and I'd been introduced as his photographer, Frank shot a quizzical glance at me. Then he said hello, adding with a smile "I like your pants" – a comment directed at a pair of old blue jodhpur-style pants I'd been wearing throughout the trip – and we went on into the house. Needless to say, I still treasure the pants.

I was still really nervous, though I comforted myself with the thought that he seemed to like me since he'd given me a kind look (even if I wasn't quite sure what that quizzical glance had meant), so hiding behind the excuse that my English wasn't really good enough, I kept quiet and started taking photos in my role as fraudulent photographer.

My fears that we'd be thrown out within the first few minutes were unfounded, however. Zappa was very relaxed, playing excerpts from an as-yet-unreleased album in the recording studio and talking to us about various interesting artworks hanging on the walls – and before we knew it five hours had passed with just the three of us. We'd arrived at eight o'clock in the evening, and it was now one o'clock in the morning!

Throughout the time that my husband was interviewing him, Zappa had the look of a man with a profound insight into things. I thought to myself that I'd never seen a man with such a penetrating intellectual gaze. When things eventually reached a pause, his eyes suddenly softened and he said to me "So how's it going? Have you got some good pictures?" When I answered that I'd be happier if he could look more directly at the

camera, he smiled and said "I'm afraid that can't be helped during an interview." And with that, I knew that my scary image of Frank Zappa had turned completely around.

Even though what fell upon my ears during those five hours of listening to his music and hearing the conversation between him and my husband was really no more than sound (music) given my limited ability to understand English at that time, the atmosphere surrounding the music and the man himself made a deep impression on me, and time flew by with a strange intensity.

When it turned 1 am, Frank finally said "I think it's about time to go", and we left the house in a state of high excitement. He walked with us to the gate, said goodbye, and we made our way back to the hotel.

Early the next morning we had the film I'd shot developed, but to my horror when we got them back all the photographs had a black bar across them, and were completely useless. I was horrified. My role as an impostor would be exposed. What to do? They couldn't be sent to Japan. After thinking about it every which way for a while, we eventually decided we'd have to try again, and phoned up Zappa's office, explaining that I was on the point of committing hara-kiri. But Gail, who answered the phone, surprised us yet again by saying "Don't worry, why don't you just come up again this afternoon?"

Still nervous as kittens, we went back to the house that afternoon. But Frank greeted us warmly without a hint of disdain for a bogus Japanese photographer with broken English. This time he was wearing a blue top with trousers tied at the ankles and a pair of black sneakers, while Gail walked around barefoot in a white cotton dress. As it wasn't an interview, Frank looked straight at the camera when I was ready to shoot, as if sensing how embarrassed I was at having messed up the photographs I'd taken the night before. He also took us down to see his archive in the vault below the property, with its unbelievable quantity of tapes and music lining the shelves.

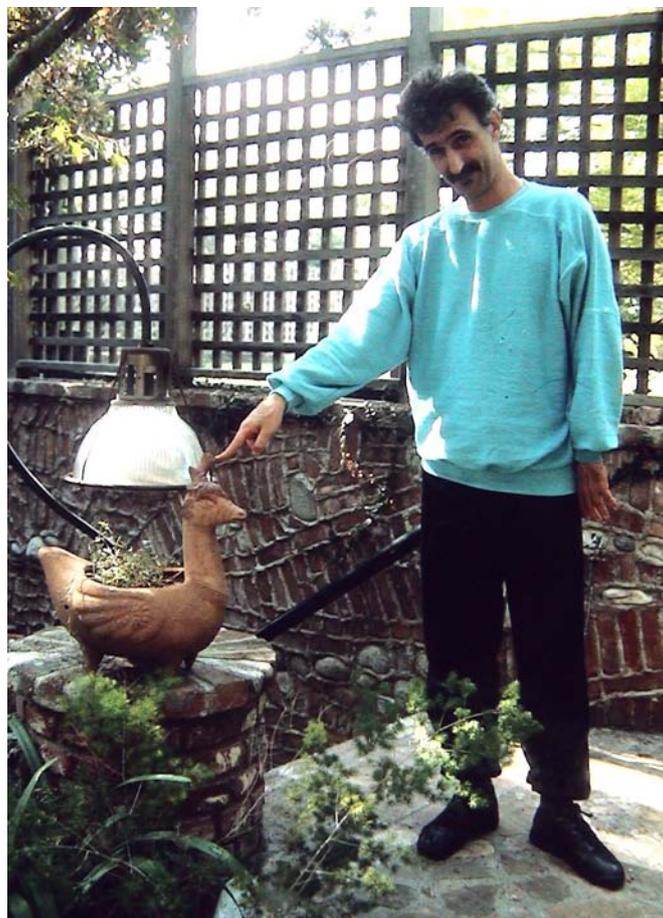
This time the photos came out okay. I even pride myself that they have the charm of an amateur's touch. Some of the more than 100 photos that I took the day were later published in a Japanese book after we'd finished our travels.

Even though it's more than 20 years ago now, the time we spent there is still etched in my memory with an unusually warm feeling. I have yet to meet another person with such a look – a deep, penetrating gaze that seemed to be able to see right through people and yet held kindness within it. In that way, I really do think he was special. And I'm sure that gaze is reflected in his music.

All this happened in the autumn of 1986. After that I met Frank on two other occasions, and even though he was surrounded by journalists, he still had that same look. In any case, at least as far as I am concerned.

And as the common creations of those same deep eyes, there is a consistency that runs right through such sharp and funny songs as Bobby Brown and music like the Yellow Shark that can bamboozle a whole orchestra.

Now in 2010, our two sons are listening to his music. I somehow get the feeling that that we're turning back the clock to that time and space in 1986.



6. DIVING INTO PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY WITH FRANK ZAPPA

Philippe Mériqot

Previously on Rondo Hatton Report: I am very attached to *YCDTOSA 3* because it was the first Zappa's album I ever bought, so I keep on exploring it.

Remember the Hi-Yo Silver routine on the album? You know, at the end of “Bobby Brown Goes Down”, Ike Willis goes “Hi-Yo Silver” and everyone laughs and can barely play (Zappa stops singing). “Well never mind”, says Zappa, and they go on the funky intro of “Keep It Greasey”. And I loved that at first hearing, I loved the laughs and the straight funk. So I was very pleased to find other appearance of the “Hi-Yo Silver” on other albums, *Does Humor Belong In Music?* and *YCDTOSA 6*. That raises two questions: 1/ how many times (and where) does the routine appear on Zappa's records? and 2/ what does “hi-yo silver” mean? Where is it from? The latter must be obvious for many of you, I am sure: it refers to The Lone Ranger, masked hero of radio and TV series, riding away in the sunset with his faithful horse Silver. But for a French guy born in the 1970s, nothing leads to the Lone Ranger, because the series were never broadcasted in France.

So I looked for “Hi-Yo Silver” on the Internet and found the Lone Ranger. I realized I heard of him a couple of times before. The Lone Ranger is recurrent in Mafalda comic strips. Felipe, one of Mafalda's friends, is a fan of The Lone Ranger comic books, and he often appears reading, playing or dreaming adventures of his hero. For years I had thought Quino had invented this character of “Llanero Solitario”.



Figure 1 A Mafalda strip involving The Lone Ranger

Another artist mentions The Lone Ranger, but not in a comic book. In his autobiography, French artist Gotlib tells that when he was a child, he played cowboys with a friend, and he always was Tonto, the faithful Indian companion. The characters of his children games are similar to The Lone Ranger. I thought Gotlib invented those characters as archetypes of cowboys' stories, but he did not: they were "real". Even if I did not know The Lone Ranger series, my spirit was full of their schemes in the popular culture, because they shaped a lot of western movies, novels or comic books.

The question of the appearance of the "Hi-Yo Silver" routine in Zappa's music found an answer on the Information Is Not Knowledge website. On the "Bobby Brown" page¹, in the Conceptual Continuity section, all mentions of The Lone Ranger are listed. I completed with dates and locations (**Error! Reference source not found.** at the end of the document). On some tracks Zappa mixed two concerts, so I chose the most plausible hypothesis: for Advance Romance, I chose the Chicago concert rather the Vancouver one, because the "Hi-Yo Silver" is attested in Chicago on Tinsel Town Rebellion; conversely, for "Keep it Greasy" I chose Seattle rather than Chicago, because it segues "Bobby Brown Goes Down" recorded in Seattle.

According to the data, the Lone Ranger seems to be a routine of the 1984 Tour, prefigured in 1977. Maybe it was the secret word for some concerts (can anyone testify?). Anyway Zappa and his musicians, especially Ike Willis, had a lot of fun with it. And I still have fun with it. Besides it reminds me my discovery of Zappa and his live performance. I was impressed by the improvised jokes followed by very serious music in the same concert. In my mind, the laughs at the end of Bobby Brown segued by Keep It Greasy are a symbol of Zappa concerts.

¹ http://globalia.net/donlope/fz/songs/Bobby_Brown.html

Song	Album	Date and Location (alt. possible Date and Location)	Mentions
Jewish Princess	Sheik Yerbouti	1970/10/30, The Palladium, NYC	"Hi-Yo, Silver! Away!"
Tinsel Town Rebellion	Does Humor Belong In Music?	1984/11/23, Bismarck Theater, Chicago, IL	"Hi-Yo, Woody! Hi-Yo, Pecker! Hi-Yo, Silver!"
Cosmik Debris	YCDTOSA 3	1984/12/20, Paramount Theatre, Seattle, WA	"Now what kind of a Masked Man are you anyway?", "With the oil of Hi-Yo, Silver", "Ah, Masked Man's a fag!"
Advance Romance	YCDTOSA 3	1984/11/23, Bismarck Theater, Chicago, IL (1984/12/18, Queen Elizabeth Theater, Vancouver)	"Hi-Yo, Silver!"
Bobby Brown	YCDTOSA 3	1984/12/20, Paramount Theatre, Seattle, WA	"An' none of the jocks even think about Tonto", "Hi-Yo, Silver! Away!"
Keep It Greasey	YCDTOSA 3	1984/12/20, Paramount Theatre, Seattle, WA (1984/11/23, Bismarck Theater, Chicago, IL)	"Thank you, Masked Man!", "Hi-Yo, Silver! Away!"
The Illinois Enema Bandit	YCDTOSA 6	1984/12/23, Universal Amphitheater, Universal City, CA	"And then the judge would say, 'No Silver jokes!'"
Massagio Galore	Jazz From Hell	c. 1985-1986, UMRK, Los Angeles, CA	"Hi-Yo, Silver! Away!"

Table 1 Mentions of The Lone Ranger in Frank Zappa's discography

FZ released a vast number of albums during his lifetime, and previously unreleased music continues to be put out after his death. So it's very difficult for people not familiar with his work to know what to listen to. Despite the huge amount of information currently available on the internet, these sites tend to reflect individual tastes rather than providing a source of information to people who like music but don't happen to know about FZ, and only create even greater confusion.

So I'd like to consider a selection of songs which might best reflect an overview of his music. It's not as if FZ himself didn't put out a 'best of' album, and though it may not be widely known, around 10 years ago a series of compilation albums were released in Japan by musicians who love FZ's music. Now that most people have access to a computer, it's a simple matter for anyone to put together a CD of their favourite tracks, and I'm sure there must be many fans who have done exactly that. As it's purely for personal pleasure, there is nothing illegal involved. I was asked to put one together myself in December 2003. I segued tracks together in the same way as on Zappa CDs without any gaps between the tracks, bearing in mind that the total length of the CD is around 75 minutes. What follows is a list of tracks I chose for my 'ultimate selection'. The relevant album is given in brackets after the titles:

- 1 Original Duke of Prunes (MYSTERY DISC)
- 2 That Would Be the End of That (CIVILISATION PHAZE III)
- 3 American Drinks (ABSOLUTELY FREE)
- 4 The Big Squeeze (THE LOST EPISODES)
- 5 Dwarf Nebula Processional March & Dwarf Nebula (WEASELS RIPPED MY FLESH)
- 6 Charles Ives (YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON STAGE ANY MORE VOLUME 5)
- 7 FZ/JCB Drum Duet (YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON STAGE ANY MORE VOLUME 5)
- 8 Nine Types of Industrial Pollution (UNCLE MEAT)
- 9 Project X (UNCLE MEAT)
- 10 Aybe Sea (BURNT WEENY SANDWICH)
- 11 Get A Little (WEASELS RIPPED MY FLESH)

- 12 Touring Can Make You Crazy (200 MOTELS)
- 13 Brixton Still Life (PLAYGROUND PSYCHOTICS)
- 14 Canard Du Jour (RETURN OF THE SON OF SHUT UP AND PLAY YOUR GUITAR)
- 15 Flambe (LÄTHER)
- 16 Whatever Happened To All The Fun In The World (SHEIK YERBOUTI)
- 17 Pink Napkins (SHUT UP AND PLAY YOUR GUITAR SOME MORE)
- 18 Tink Walks Amok (THE MAN FROM UTOPIA)
- 19 Love Story (THE PERFECT STRANGER)
- 20 Wistful with a Fistful (THING FISH)
- 21 Aerobics in Bondage (FZ MEETS THE MOTHERS OF PREVENTION)
- 22 Whitey (Prototype) (EVERYTHING IS HEALING NICELY)
- 23 Dio Fa (CIVILISATION PHAZE III)

Two years later, the guitar album Trance-Fusion was released. It featured the track "Bowling on Charen", long familiar from bootlegs and a particular favourite of mine, so I decided to include it in my ultimate selection. However due to the restriction on length, I had to switch if for another track. To do that I decided to take out Tracks 16 (Whatever Happened To All The Fun In The World) and 17 (Pink Napkins). This kind of substitution to the list will surely continue as new Zappa albums are released in the future. However, the situation is somewhat complicated in FZ's case. As he was unable to obtain the rights to release the soundtrack album to 200 Motels himself (the Beatles had a similar problem), it was released as a CD by another company after his death, but is now unobtainable again. The complications arising from such rights issues mean that Rykodisc, who were the first to release FZ on CD, do not have the right to issue CDs of his unreleased work – which is now being released mainly through mail order by the Zappa family. Of course fans don't really care what company releases the record, they just want to hear it, but if anyone were to think of commercially releasing an ultimate 'best album' selected from Zappa's entire oeuvre (excluding bootlegs), it's likely that the rights to the different albums would be a huge problem given that they are divided, making such a project all but impossible.

My criteria for selecting tracks were as follows:

1. Must fit onto a single CD. Length the same as a double LP, 75 minutes
- 2 Consideration to be given to the overall balance as an album
- 3 Must cover the entire range of Zappa's career
- 4 Tracks to be listed in order of recording, not order of release (except where accurate dates are unknown)
- 5 Selection to allow as many tracks as possible to be chosen
- 6 No editing out of sections, or editing separate tracks together
- 7 Selection of tracks must reflect the wide range of Zappa's talent and personality
- 8 Assume an audience familiar with various types of music such as classical and jazz
- 9 Content should aim to offer new insights even to hard-core fans of Zappa's work

However when first listened to the CD I'd made, I realised there was a problem – the difference in volume levels and sound quality due to the different recording ambiances of the albums. For example, Track 15 Flambe 15 is shorter than the version recorded on Sleep Dirt, which satisfies Condition 5. The conversation at the end of the track resonates with That Would Be The End Of That in Track 2, satisfying Condition 2. But the sound on Läther is quite poor because of the quality of the source, so when Bowling on Charen comes in after Flambe on track 15, the difference in both the volume level and sound quality is quite striking, and does not make for comfortable listening. That's not really acceptable on an album.

A 'best of' album is usually a compilation of well-known hit songs, intended to introduce an artist's work to a wider audience. In that sense, my 'ultimate selection' runs counter to this concept. Despite this, I'm happy to propose it as a 'best of' album for FZ's work given that the standard concept of a 'best' album does not suit his work in the first place, and in any case FZ was not simply a popular musician. It's not accurate to say that FZ did not release a 'best of' album in the usual sense of the phrase. However, such hit songs are not really suitable for someone who is intending to sit down and start seriously listening to FZ's work.

I recently dusted down my 'ultimate selection' after a few years and listened to it again. Even though I say so myself, there was a freshness to it that was quite surprising. So I would really like to see it made available for people who love music but don't normally listen to rock music or FZ, because you need to have 20 albums to hand to put together a CD like that. And the only people who could do it would be people who are already into Zappa's music, just as the only people who would actually be able to truly appreciate or criticise my selection would have to be keen FZ fans.

In any case, I think it is well worth having a discussion between fans about an 'ultimate selection' of Zappa's music. Whatever else, it would reveal exactly how people really feel about FZ's work, a task not to be undertaken lightly.

8. NO POO-POO JOKES: Does toilet humour belong in music?

Simon Prentis

We're all familiar with the accusation. Zappa's lyrics are tasteless and offensive. Off-putting. Juvenile. Puerile. From Barry Miles to Charles Sharr Murray, 'distinguished' critics – even those who otherwise claim to 'admire' the music – almost fall over themselves in their haste to distance themselves from the horror of lyrics that deal with topics that apparently do not belong on the dance-floor.

Of course – as usual – Zappa has not made it easy for himself. Getting a photo taken sitting on a toilet was always liable to be taken the wrong way, and whatever he may have claimed to the contrary at any given point, it was clearly taken with his permission. But the notion of the philosopher sitting naked astride his john, secure in the knowledge that what lurks within the mind is far uglier than anything external – or anything expelled from the body – is clearly too much for those who do not wish to be reminded that they 'go doody' too.

In his notorious essay written in 1995, Ian Penman even sneers that "in the pre-Viz, pre-Mayall and Edmondson 1970s, [Zappa] was the only legitimate supplier of fart and bum and willy jokes." For the 'poop' life of me, I have absolutely no idea what he's talking about. And when it comes down to it, I'm not sure that he does, either.

What and where exactly are these 'fart and bum and willy' jokes? There's really not much in the way of humour, or even indirect references, to things that look like 'toilet' humour, unless you are the sort of person who thinks that Lumpy Gravy is code for projectile diarrhoea. Granted, Zappa uses a great deal of robust language, and makes plenty of reference to the physical functions of the body (mostly sexual). But the focus is on exposing the absurdity and ineptitude of human behaviour in plain terms, not collusion in titterment about anal vapours. Tossed off as a bald assertion without any supporting evidence, Penman's claim can only have any validity on the assumption that the mere mention of human genitalia or excretory organs must be 'a joke' because, as adults, we are clearly above mentioning such things.

But if that is the case, the question then becomes why have we decided certain subjects are so taboo? Why is it considered impolite to discuss things that are, for most people most of the time, topics of the utmost interest? (If they weren't, none of us would be here). Because they're embarrassing, of course. You dummy, didn't you know that? Well, I guess I did, it was just that I didn't figure that was a reason not to discuss it. And anyway, if you don't like being embarrassed, wouldn't it be a good idea to try to deal with it, and figure out how to prevent yourself feeling that way, before it mutates within and jumps up to bite both you and your friends on the ass?

With the possible exception of *Luigi and the Wise Guys*, I have never found anything Zappa has chosen to sing about to be juvenile or puerile. It's just never occurred to me. Does that make me puerile and juvenile? Perhaps. But I've never been a fan of the kind of sniggering humour propagated by the Jackass films or National Lampoon-style frat-boy humour – or even by Viz or Mayall and Edmondson. I find it boring. And that's never been what Zappa's undoubted propensity for mentioning the unmentionable has been about, if you paid any attention to what he was actually saying.

Penman's thesis would seem to be that Zappa uses the 'excuse' of parody to indulge in a series of verbal gross-out contests. But the essence of parody is caricature and exaggeration. It's about bringing our attention back to things we'd rather not think about. And just because someone is reminding us that yes, we do generally leave a bad smell behind us, and that yes, the hypocritical shenanigans so often enacted in the name of sexual relationships are absurd, it doesn't mean they're not serious in their intent. But you do need to be able to understand the context.

I once made the mistake of playing '*I Have Been In You*' to some new friends who were interested in finding out what Zappa was all about. Although I'd assumed we had been talking pretty openly with each other up to that point, the extremely graphic, not to say brutal, portrayal of the encounter was too much for them to take. We're still good friends, but they don't often place requests for a Zappa evening.

So I can understand that the subject matter is not to everyone's taste. The market votes with its feet and pop charts exist for a reason. Not everyone wants to know. But don't tell me that Zappa is about toilet humour. That's the last thing on his mind.



10. ONE MORE TIME FOR THE WORLD

Original Versions

3. NARRATIVIUM EXPERIMENT

Le Grotchy

Je suis français. En soi, ça présente des avantages, mais aussi parfois quelques inconvénients. Le plus gênant pour moi, lorsque j'ai découvert pour la première fois la musique de Frank, en 76, année mythique du bicentenaire des USA, c'est mon incapacité à comprendre "en temps réel" ses paroles, mon niveau d'anglais ne me permettant alors qu'à péniblement traduire les lyrics, lorsqu'ils figuraient sur l'album. Pourtant, bien que le caractère licencieux des textes provoquaient en l'adolescent que j'étais d'étranges sons gutturaux, c'est la musique avant tout qui conquiert mon esprit, et spécialement les chorus de Frank, m'entraînant déjà dans un voyage mental qui aujourd'hui encore me ravit à chaque écoute.

Je viens de terminer un livre qui me parlait du "Narrativium", cette capacité de l'homme à se raconter des histoires, qui lui permit à l'aube de l'humanité de dominer son environnement, (ou tout du moins à s'en donner l'illusion ...) avec des "et si" des "pourquoi", des "parce que". Le cerveau était l'arme de cette espèce, l'organe dominant, développé au fil du temps grâce au pouvoir de l'imagination. Tout naturellement, j'ai pensé à la musique de Frank, à cette guitare dont on a envie qu'elle n'arrête jamais de jouer, aux images qu'elle imprime dans sa tête.

Pour ma part, je considère la musique de deux points de vue. Le premier s'adresse à mon ventre, les vibrations des basses fréquences vibrent, le rythme "pilote" mon corps. Le second s'adresse à mon cerveau, les fréquences moyennes et hautes de la voix et des instruments chantent les mélodies qui me racontent des histoires. Celles de Frank m'ont particulièrement touchées, depuis ma première écoute. Pourtant, mon univers musical ne s'est pas centré autour de son oeuvre par hasard. J'ai abordé bien d'autres artistes, avec beaucoup de plaisir, mais aucun ne m'a autant touché par son imagination. La richesse de son travail, les nombreux styles abordés m'ont séduit d'emblée. Mais pas les paroles, que je comprenais à peine. Je suis vraiment passé à côté. Je suis français.

Petit à petit, mon niveau d'anglais s'est amélioré, j'ai pu comprendre de mieux en mieux le sens des textes, mais ça restait pour moi au second plan. Ce qui m'attirait avant tout, c'était ses soli, dont j'avais pu apprécier sur scène l'intensité. Désormais, je ne pourrai vivre sans ma dose, provoquant déjà autour de moi des "t'es chiant avec ton Zappa !".

Faut dire que je n'avais pas grand chose de mieux à écouter. Aujourd'hui encore, d'ailleurs ...

Quand il publie "Shut Up ...", je comprends que je ne suis pas seul, que d'autres apprécient les voyages où sa guitare nous mène. La note bleue que cherchait Miles Davis aurait elle décidé de s'installer dans les chœurs de Frank ? Ou plutôt, comme certains voyages, ce n'est pas la destination qui compterait, mais la route ? En tous cas, pour l'auditeur que je suis, cette route que je connais si bien, pour l'avoir si souvent empruntée, et qui pourtant change à chaque voyage, cette route, c'est un peu ma quête du graal à moi, elle me parle, me raconte des histoires chaque fois différentes, je n'ai de cesse de la parcourir, et pourtant je me fous un peu d'où elle mène, pourvu que ces notes bleues continuent à chatouiller mes synapses. Je n'aurai sans doute pas assez d'une vie pour faire le tour de son monde, alors tant pis pour moi, j'ai (presque) fait l'impasse, j'ai choisi la liberté : la musique de Frank, c'est mon "Narrativium" à moi, après tout, je suis français ...

5. フランク・ザッパについて

伊礼隆子

私が初めてフランクに会ったのは1986年の秋ロサンジェルス彼の自宅を訪ねていったときのことでした。

私と主人はその年の4月に日本を出発して5ヶ月ほど台湾、中国、香港、韓国、ハワイを経てアメリカを横断する予定でロスに来ていました。ロスで古いプリマスという車を安価で購入してサンフランシスコの日本時代の友達の家を訪ね、彼等の庭でキャンプをさせて貰って、グラウンドキャニオンやデッドホースポイント、ペインティドデザートなどを見て回った後、またロスに戻ったのですが、その理由は、主人がロスでは是非フランク・ザッパに会いたいのので何とか日本のメディアを使って彼をインタビューしようと考えていたからでした。日本でザッパのレコードの解説を書いていた八木康夫さんを知っていた主人は以前にも一度八木さんの依頼でフランクをインタビューしていました。その時の主人は緊張のあまり、自分で納得の行くようなインタビューができなかったこともあり、「今回こそもう一度あの男に会って・・・」つまり、ロスにいるあいだにフランクに会わない手はないという思いで、実は八木さんとの連絡をしないまま、フランクの事務所に電話をしてインタビューの許可を取ったのでした。

何しろ、主人との付き合いの冒頭からフランクの音楽のことを聞かされ続けた私です。主人は私用にと、「ザッパ入門」なる自分の選曲した音楽を詰めたカセットテープを作ってくれて、私はその当時はやりの「ウォーカー」を使って、地下鉄に乗っているあいだや街を歩きまわるあいだにイヤフォンでフランクの音楽を一生懸命聞いていました。それまでの私はフランス語を勉強していて、すべてがフランス系、シャンソン喫茶やフランス料理店、吸うタバコはジタンかゴロワーズ、アパートの中も私なりのフランス風にしてそこで聞く音楽はシャンソンがほとんど、という状況でしたから、最初フランクの音楽は私の耳には聞きづらかったのが正直なところでした。しかしながら、私はすぐに彼の音楽の複雑であると同時に明快であり、痛切であると同時に何とも楽しいザッパ音楽の響きに魅了されました。残念ながら、その当時の私は英語がほとんど話せず、アルバムの解説や翻訳にその理解を頼らざるを得なかったのですが、あれから20年も経った今でも彼の歌詞には主人の解説を要するところが多々あります。

「フランクはね、インタビュアーのことが気に入らなかつたりすると、10分くらいでもう出て行けと言ったりするらしいから、その點頭に入れておいて」と主人に言われ、フォトグラファーという名目で主人に同行した私は「偽フォトグラファー」がすぐにばれてしまうに違いない、そうしたらフランクは私達をすぐに蹴飛ばしてしまうかも知れないと、緊張感いっぱいフランクの家の玄関に立ったのでした。

ブザーが鳴り、「ハイ」というのどかな女性の声、ドアがカチッという音を立てて開き、いよいよハッタリのときが来たと身を引き締めて一歩踏み出す私達、玄関から家までの距離が異常に長く、あるいはあまりにも短く感じた時、気がついたら目の前にフランクが立っていました。先に歩いていた主人が挨拶をし、私を「同行のフォトグラファー」だと紹介したとき、フランクは「アレッ」というような表情をして私を見ました。それから彼は「ハイ」と優しく言って「君のそのパンツ、いいね。」と私の、旅行で着古したブルーのニッカーポッカーを褒めてくれ、それから私達を家の中に入れました。当然、そのニッカーポッカーは今でも大事に取ってあります。

その時の彼の「アレッ」という表情の意味がわからなくて、それでも、やさしい目で私と視線を合わせたのだからきっと気に入ってくれたかも知れないと、自分を励まして中に入ったにもかかわらず、緊張感はなかなかとれず、私は英語がそれほど話せないのだという理由を口実に、ただ黙ってカメラマンのふりをしてシャッターを切りまくりました。

15分で追い出されるかも知れないという心配とは裏腹に、ザッパはリラックスしていて、彼のレコーディング・スタジオでリリース前の新しいアルバムを聞かせてくれたり、壁に飾ってある面白いアート作品の説明をしたり、何と私たちは午後8時から夜中の1時まで5時間も！ザッパと主人と私の3人だけで過ごしました。

主人がインタビューしているあいだの彼の目は物事の深遠を知っている人間の目でした。これほど知的な目をした男をみたことがあつたらうかと思いました。インタビューが一段落すると、彼の目は優しげになり、「どうだ？写真のほうは上手く行っているか？」と聞きました。「貴方がもっとカメラの方をみてくれるといいんですけど」と言うと、「インタビューのあいだはね、仕様がなよ」と微笑んで言いました。ここで私は、私の中での怖いザッパが優しいザッパに変わったのを知りました。

5時間ものあいだ、ザッパの音楽を聴き、主人とザッパの会話に耳を傾け、英語がよく判らない時期でしたからその会話も私にとっては殆ど音（楽）としてしか耳に入ってこなかったのですが、ザッパとその音楽のかもしれない出する雰囲気はとても印象的で、時間はとても深く早く過ぎていきました。

夜中の1時を回ったところにザッパは「もうそろそろ」と言ったので、主人も私も興奮さめやらぬ気分でザッパ邸を出ました。ザッパは玄関まで一緒に出てきてくれて、「おやすみ」を言って我々はホテルにもどりました。

翌朝さっそく、撮った写真の現像をして貰ったのですが、写真を見てびっくり！どういうわけだか、すべての写真に白い線が入っていて、使い物にならない状態でした。私はショックで真っ青。これで本当に偽カメラマンがばれた。どうしよう。日本にだって送れない。

さんざん考えあぐねた結果、主人がもう一度トライしようと言ってザッパ事務所に電話をかけ、タカコがもう少しで「ハラキリ」をするところだと説明したら、電話に出たゲイルが「あら、そんなに心配しないで、今日の午後にまたいらっしゃい」と言ってきたそうで、私は再度びっくり。

午後になってまた緊張感でいっぱいのまま、ザッパ邸を再度訪問。英語のたどたどしい日本人の偽カメラマンに嫌がる様子もなくにこやかに迎え入れられ、その日のザッパはブルーのトップに足首で裾のつぼまったズボンに黒のスニーカーという格好で現れました。ゲイルは白いコットンのドレスを着て、裸足で歩き回っていました。その日はインタビューはなく、ザッパは、前夜の写真の失敗で恥ずかしさのあまり緊張している私に同情してか、シャッターを切るたびにカメラに目を向けてくれました。それから、ザッパは、主人と私を敷地内にある彼の仕事の資料庫に連れていってくれ、そこには沢山のテープや譜面が信じられない量で棚に並んでいました。

その日の写真は成功しました。素人写真のよさがでていと自負しています。100枚以上も撮った写真の一部は、旅行を終えて英国に住むようになってから、日本の八木さんの本に掲載されました。

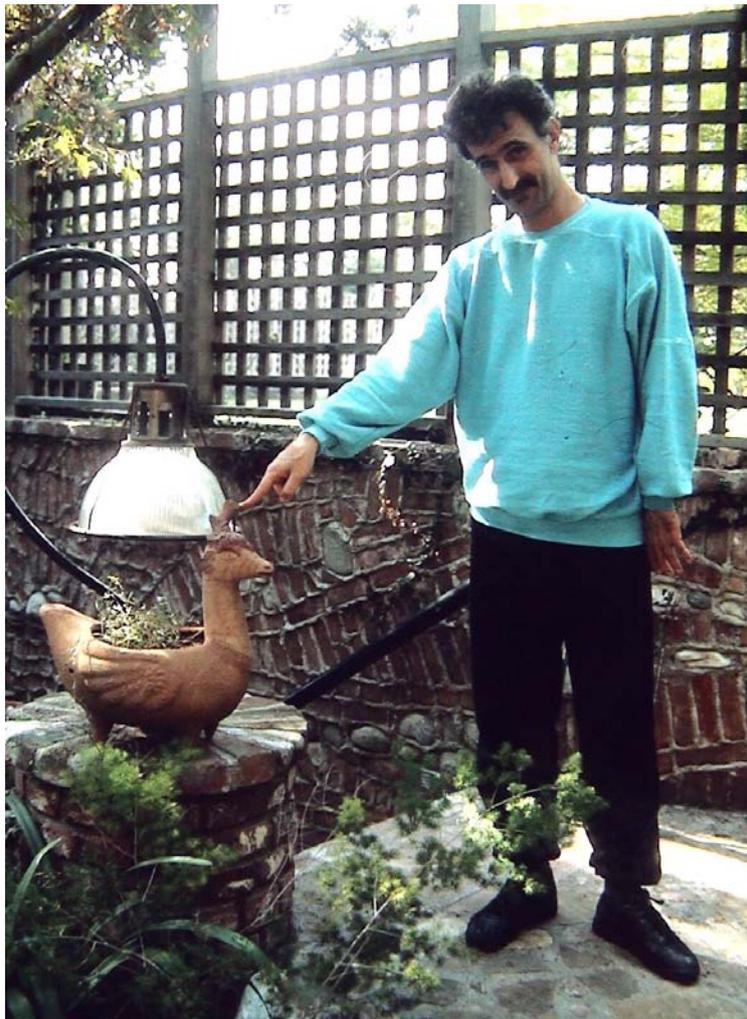
この経験はあれから20年以上もたった今でも、何かとても暖かいものとして私の脳裏に焼きついています。

ザッパのあの深い、人を突き通すように見つめているのに優しさがそこにあると感じさせる目つきの人にはその後出会っていません。その点において、彼は特別だと思います。その目つきがザッパの音楽に反映されているという気がします。

1986年の秋の出来事。あれからザッパには2度会う機会がありましたが、ジャーナリストで混雑している人の群れの中でも彼の目は同じでした。少なくとも私にとっては。

ボビー・ブラウンのように何とも愉快で痛切な歌や、イエロー・シャークのようにオーケストラを困らせる音楽も彼の深い目が創造したものとして一貫しています。

2010年の現在においては、私と主人の2人の息子がザッパを聴いています。1986年におきた時間と空間がそのまま蘇っているような気がします。



F Zは生前アルバムを非常に多く発表し、没後も未公開の音源がCD化されている。そのため、F Zの音楽に馴染みのない人は何から聴いていいのか戸惑う。現在はインターネットから多くの情報が得られる割には、それらはどれも個人的な趣向を反映したもので、音楽通でありながらF Zについて知らない人に対して、的確な情報を与えると言うよりはむしろ、ますます混乱の度合いを深めさせると思える。そこで考えたいのが、F Zの幅広い音楽を概観するためにベストである選曲集だ。F Z自身がそうしたベスト・アルバムを発表しなかったわけではないし、またこれはあまり知られていないと思うが、日本では10年ほど前にF Zの音楽を愛するミュージシャンたちが選曲したベスト・アルバムが数種類発売された。コンピュータが家庭に浸透し、今では好みの曲をまとめたCDを作ることは誰にとっても簡単に出来るようになったので、自分好みのF Zのベスト・アルバムを作っているファンも少なくないだろう。それは個人が楽しむためのもので、法律に触れることではない。わたしはある人からの提案があって、2003年12月にそうした究極盤を1枚構成してみた。曲と曲との間に空白時間を設けず、つまりF ZのCDと同じようにセイグウェイとし、またCDの収録時間75分前後になることを念頭に置いた。次にその曲目を列挙する。曲目の後に収録されるアルバム名を示す。

- 1 「Original Duke Of Prunes」 — 『MYSTERY DISC』
- 2 「That Would Be The End Of That」 — 『CIVILIZATION PHAZE III』
- 3 「America Drinks」 — 『ABSOLUTELY FREE』
- 4 「The Big Squeeze」 — 『THE LOST EPISODES』
- 5 「Dwarf Nebula Processional March And Dwarf Nebula」 — 『WEASELS RIPPED MY FLESH』
- 6 「Charles Ives」 — 『YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON STAGE ANYMORE VOL.5』
- 7 「FZ/JCB Drum Duet」 — 『YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON STAGE ANYMORE VOL.5』
- 8 「Nine Types Of Industrial Pollution」 — 『UNCLE MEAT』
- 9 「Project X」 — 『UNCLE MEAT』
- 10 「Aybe Sea」 — 『BURNT WEENY SANDWICH』

- 1 1 「Get A Little」 — 『WEASELS RIPPED MY FLESH』
- 1 2 「Touring Can Make You Crazy」 — 『200 MOTELS』
- 1 3 「Brixton Still Life」 — 『PLAYGROUND PSYCHOTICS』
- 1 4 「Canard Du Jour」 — 『RETURN OF THE SON OF SHUT UP'N PLAY YER GUITAR』
- 1 5 「Flambe」 — 『LÄTHER』
- 1 6 「What Ever Happened To All The Fun」 — 『SHEIK YERBOUTI』
- 1 7 「Pink Napkins」 — 『SHUT UP'N PLAY YER GUITAR SOME MORE』
- 1 8 「Tink Walks Amok」 — 『THE MAN FROM UTOPIA』
- 1 9 「Love Story」 — 『THE PERFECT STRANGER』
- 2 0 「Wistful With A Fist-Full」 — 『THING-FISH』
- 2 1 「Aerobics In Bondage」 — 『FRANK ZAPPA MEETS THE MOTHERS OF PREVENTION』
- 2 2 「Whitey(Prototype)」 — 『EVERYTHING IS HEALING NICELY』
- 2 3 「Dio Fa」 — 『CIVILIZATION PHAZE III』

それから2年経ってギター・アルバム『Trance-Fusion』が発売された。そこには昔から海賊盤でお馴染みの、そしてわたしが非常に好む「Bowling On Charen」が収録されていたので、上記の究極盤にそれを組み入れることにした。だが、収録時間の関係からどれかの曲と置き換える必要がある。そこで、1 6 「What Ever Happened To All The Fun」と1 7 「Pink Napkins」を省くことにした。こうした置き換えは今後も発表され続けるF Zのアルバムの内容によってはまた生じるだろう。ただし、F Zの場合はいささか複雑な様相を呈している。これはビートルズにも言えるように、F Zは『200 Motels』のサウンドトラック盤のCDを自社から発売する権利を得ることが出来ず、没後に別の会社がCD化したが、現在はまた入手不可能になっている。こうした発売権の複雑さは、F ZのCDを最初に販売したR Y K O—D I S KはF Zの未発表音源のCD化に関しては権利を有せず、それらは現在ザッパ・ファミリーが主に通信販売で順次発表していることにも言える。ファンにすればどの会社から発売されようと、とにかく聴くことが出来ればいいのだが、海賊盤を除いたF Zの全録音を対象にした究極のベスト・アルバムを作

って販売するとなると、各アルバムの権利が分散所有されることは大きな障害となると予想され、上記の究極盤はまず不可能だ。

さて、選曲に当たっての条件は次の9つの項目だ。

- ①「CD 1枚にまとめる。ダブルLPと同じ75分前後」
- ②「アルバムとしての完成度を考慮する」
- ③「活動全期を概観出来るようにする」
- ④「アルバムの発売順ではなく、録音年代順に並べる。ただし、正確な年月が不明の場合は多少の前後は仕方がない」
- ⑤「少しでも多くの曲を紹介する」
- ⑥「曲の一部を切り取ったり、また別の曲と結合や合成はしない」
- ⑦「FZの広範な才能と人脈を示すためにあらゆるタイプの曲から選ぶ」
- ⑧「クラシックやジャズなど、さまざまな音楽を聴き込んで来た人を対象にする」
- ⑨「FZの全曲を知るファンが聴いても新たな発見があるような内容を心がける」

ところが、実際にCDを作って聴いてみると、ひとつの問題に直面する。それは各アルバムの録音特性の差によって、音の質と大きさに違いがあることだ。たとえば、15「Flambe」は『Sleep Dirt』に収録されるヴァージョンより短いため、条件⑤にかなう。また曲の終わりに会話が付属することは、内容はさておき、会話曲の2「That Would Be The End Of That」呼応し、②の条件を満たす。だが、『Laether』はマスター・テープを複製したための音の劣化が顕著で、15「Flambe」の後に「Bowling On Charen」が始まると、音量が大きく、音質もよいことに驚き、違和感を抱く。これはアルバムとしてはいいことではない。

ベスト・アルバムはよく知られたヒット曲を集め、また万人のための入門盤という見方が一般的だ。その意味からすれば、上記の究極盤はそれに反する。にもかかわらず、それをFZの現在におけるベスト・アルバムとみなしたい思いは、FZにはそもそもベス

ト・アルバムの概念がふさわしくなく、またF Zが単に流行に乗じた音楽家ではなかったことをほのめかす。F Zが通常の意味でのベスト・アルバムのヒット曲を放たなかったという表現は正確ではない。だが、そうしたヒット曲はこれからF Zをまともにじっくりと聴き始める人にはあまり必要がない。先日わたしは数年ぶりにこの究極盤を思い出して聴いてみた。自分で言うのも何だが、新鮮な驚きで聴くことが出来た。そのため、ぜひともこれを、普段ロックやF Zを聴かない音楽通に聴いてほしいが、これと同じ盤を作って聴くには20枚ものアルバムを手元に置く必要がある。そして、それが出来る人はすでにF Zの音楽に深く魅せられている。そのため、わたしの究極盤に同調、あるいは反論出来る人は、F Zの熱心なファンだけということになる。それはともかく、ファンが考えるF Zの究極的なベスト・アルバムについて論じられてもいいのではないだろうか。それはとりもなおさず、F Zの魅力の総決算を一個人がどのようにみなしているかを示し、気軽な気持ちでは挑めないはずだ。
