

THE RONDO HATTON REPORT VOL XIII

DECEMBER 21, 2012

This, as you might have guessed, is not the end of the world – whatever the denizens of Inca Roads might have you believe. It is, however, the end of the Rondo Hatton Report – at least for the moment. With an extended archive of over 100 contributions in six different languages, now amounting to some 110,000 words, we can justly claim to have fulfilled our mission to produce a hefty quilt of intellectual underclothing in the guise of zappalogical opinion.

The website will stay live for the time being, and any future contributions held until there is enough material to consider putting out a new issue. Right now, personal and professional issues dictate that our time is spent elsewhere. In a way it's sad that the RHR won't be continuing, but we're sure we'll all be getting into something better. We'd like to express our thanks for your attendance at this website, and to all the people who've contributed time and effort to help create this imaginary journal.

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1. THE BEST COVERS YOU NEVER HEARD IN YOUR LIFE

John Anthony

The album *The Best Band You Never Heard In Your Live* features a wide variety of covers including “Stairway to Heaven,” “Ring of Fire,” “Purple Haze,” “Sunshine of Your Love,” “I Left My Heart in San Francisco,” and the “Theme From ‘Bonzana.’” This album also features many of Zappa’s compositions spanning his entire career including “Andy,” “Zomby Woof,” “Cosmik Debris,” and “The Eric Dolphy Memorial Barbecue.” This paper examines the covers “Ring of Fire,” “Purple Haze,” and “Sunshine of Your Love” and how by removing important authentic elements found in the original recordings, Zappa was able to create completely new arrangements.

Ring of Fire

“Ring of Fire” was recorded by Johnny Cash in 1963. The instrumentation for this recording includes two trumpets, two female vocalists, two acoustic guitars, acoustic bass, and drum set. The song is in the key of G and has a tempo of quarter-note equals approximately 104. The overall stylistic aesthetic of Cash’s arrangement is introduced in the four bar introduction. The time signature alternates between 3/4 and 4/4 while two trumpets play melodic material in a mariachi style. Throughout the rest of the score, the trumpets use this melodic idea as a call and response to Cash’s vocals. The underlying instrumental texture includes two guitars, quarter note lines played by the bassist, and a drummer playing a “train beat.”

Example #1: Four bars of Cash’s “Ring of Fire”

The musical score for Example #1 shows four bars of the introduction to "Ring of Fire". It features four staves: two Trumpets, two Acoustic Guitars, an Upright Bass, and a Drum Set. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature alternates between 3/4 and 4/4. The Trumpets play a melodic line in a mariachi style. The Acoustic Guitars play a rhythmic accompaniment with chords G, C, G, D, G. The Upright Bass plays a steady quarter-note line. The Drum Set plays a "train beat" pattern.

For Zappa's arrangement, the key signature remains the same; however, the tempo is slower at approximately quarter note equals 74-77. The instrumentation includes guitar, drums, electric bass, glockenspiel, percussion, trombone, trumpet, and piano.

In the introduction, we see that the bass omits the original quarter note feel and uses a sparse bass line that emphasizes beat 2 while drummer Chad Whackerman plays a reggae groove emphasizing beats 2 and 4. The trumpets' melodic line from the original version is omitted and a new line is written. This new line is borrowed from the first four bars of the verse and is tripled in octaves by trombonist Walt Fowler, guitarist Mike Keneally, and glockenspielist Ed Mann. While the group focuses on playing in a reggae style, pianist Bobby Martin incorporates cliché country piano fills, such as double stops, throughout the introduction and different sections of the song. Martin's country cliché improvisation gives the listener the sense of stylistic allusion to the original Cash version, even though no piano is used.

Example #2: First four bars of Zappa's "Ring of Fire"

The musical score for the first four bars of Zappa's "Ring of Fire" is presented in a multi-staff format. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Trombone:** Plays a melodic line in the bass clef, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note G4.
- Glockenspiel:** Plays a melodic line in the treble clef, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, then eighth notes A4, B4, and C5, and ending with a quarter rest.
- Piano:** Labeled "Cliche Country Licks", it plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the treble clef.
- Guitar:** Plays a melodic line in the treble clef, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note G4.
- Bass:** Plays a sparse bass line in the bass clef, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, then eighth notes A2, B2, and C3, and ending with a quarter rest.
- Drum Set:** Plays a reggae groove in the bass clef, featuring a consistent pattern of eighth notes on beats 2 and 4, with a "Drum Fill" indicated at the end of the fourth bar.

Unlike the other covers analyzed within this paper, "Ring of Fire" is the only song for which the band attempts to imitate vocals found in the original recording. This imitation was done by guitarist Mike Keneally and can be found later in the album on "Sunshine of Your Love." Zappa also incorporated Keneally's vocal imitation later on the country inspired song "Rhymin' Man" from the album *Broadway the Hard Way*.

After the two-bar, dissonant introduction, Hendrix introduces the first melodic idea. This eight-bar idea is performed legato, incorporating bends and slides. While this melodic idea is played, Redding plays quarter notes to keep the pulse steady, and Mitchell introduces a basic rock beat. But in Zappa's arrangement, Hendrix's melodic idea is performed staccato and in octave intervals by trumpeter Walt Fowler and tenor saxophonist Albert Wing. This melodic idea is carried on top of the initial E pedal point and synthesizer choir.

Example #5: First four bars of melodic idea in "Purple Haze"

The musical score for Example #5 consists of six staves. The top two staves are for Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.) and Trumpet (Tpt.), both in treble clef. They play a melodic line consisting of eighth and quarter notes. The next two staves are for Mellotron Choir (Mell. Chr.) and Mellotron Brass (Mell. Brs.), both in grand staff notation. They play a sustained chordal accompaniment. The fifth staff is for Bass, in bass clef, playing a steady quarter-note groove. The bottom staff is for Drums (Dr.), showing a basic rock beat with a snare drum on the backbeat and a kick drum on the downbeat.

After the melodic idea is introduced, Hendrix initiates the basic groove that carries throughout the song. The group creates an ambient sound through the use of guitar effects and improvised bass lines and drum fills over the chord progression E7#9, G, and A. Zappa's arrangement utilizes Hendrix's chord progression but omits the use of ambience and improvisation and gives the groove a metronomic sense. The guitar is omitted except for playing a quarter note every two measures on the downbeat of four. Zappa introduces the synthesizer as a substitute for the rhythm guitar. The synthesizer plays a repeating pattern that incorporates the use of a tritone interval within the chord; this could be seen as a borrowing from the original recording.

Example #6: Zappa Keyboard Groove in "Purple Haze"

The musical score for Example #6 is a single staff in bass clef. It shows a repeating pattern of chords and notes. The first measure contains a chord with a flat (F#9) and a quarter note. The second measure contains a chord with a flat (G) and a quarter note. The third measure contains a chord with a flat (A) and a quarter note. The fourth measure contains a chord with a flat (E7#9) and a quarter note. The pattern repeats every four measures.

Sunshine of Your Love

“Sunshine of Your Love” was recorded by the rock group Cream in 1967 for the album *Disraeli Gears*. The song is in the key of D major with a time signature of 4/4 and the tempo remains constant throughout at quarter note equals 112-116. Stylistic aspects of this song include Clapton’s famous “woman tone” which involves rolling the tone knob off on a guitar as well as using a wah-wah pedal tilted all the way up to create a dark sound. Another aspect is Ginger Baker’s “jungle” groove. This groove focuses on 1 and 3 opposed to the common 2 and 4 rock beat.

Example #7: “Jungle” groove in “Sunshine of Your Love”



In Cream’s version of the chorus, Clapton and Bruce play unison hits while Baker improvises drum fills. The melody is sung by Bruce and Clapton adds harmonies throughout. In the last two bars of the chorus, the group plays a dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythm in unison before Clapton and Bruce return to the principal riff. In Zappa’s arrangement, drummer Chad Wackerman slows the tempo and implies a new time signature of 6/8. At this point, we hear a new vocalist, Bobby Martin. Once more, the melody is omitted but the lyrics are now shouted. We also hear a new texture created by trumpeter Walt Fowler’s and trombonist Bruce Fowler’s improvised fanfare. After the chorus, guitarist Mike Keneally takes over the lyrics and uses the Johnny Cash voice found in “Ring of Fire” for the third verse. The chorus appears again and segues into Zappa’s composition, “Let’s Move to Cleveland.”

Example #13: First four bars of Cream’s chorus in “Sunshine of Your Love”

Example #14: First four bars of Zappa’s chorus in “Sunshine of Your Love”

Conclusions on “Sunshine of Your Love” and “Purple Haze”

Throughout the last forty-five years, rock musicians have considered “Sunshine of Your Love” and “Purple Haze” to be part of rock music’s canon. Often times when musicians perform these songs, they use a certain amount

of authenticity found similar to Butler's discussion of 1960s British bands. These musicians spend hours striving for authenticity in their own arrangements of these songs by learning the solos verbatim, imitating the vocals and the instrumentalists' styles. Rarely does a musician deviate from the stylistic aspects found in both of these songs.

Throughout his career, Zappa created sarcasm and humor to make fun of not only society but also to the objects that society holds in high regard. Throughout the 1980s, Zappa saw resurgence in popularity with the musical genre that had now been labeled "classic rock." Songs such as "Sunshine of Your Love" and "Purple Haze" were starting to receive airplay on these new classic rock radio stations. In 1986, Zappa released a song called "We're Turning Again" from the album *Frank Zappa Meets the Mothers of Prevention*. In the song, Zappa pokes fun at the hippie society that associated themselves with this music by referencing Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, Cream, Janis Joplin, the Who, and the Mamas & the Papas. When Zappa incorporated these songs into the band's repertoire in 1988, he wanted to find a way to deviate from the original recordings that would not only surprise the audience but also tear down the pedestal that both of these songs were placed on. By examining these transcriptions and comparisons, we see that Zappa was able to accomplish this idea in different ways.

(Transcriptions by John Anthony throughout, with Ed Davis on #13 and #14)



2. LINGUA FRANKA PART IX: A Little Nostalgia For The Old Folks

Arjun von Caemmerer

Sometime in 2004 (round about November) a lad, lonely and green, and too small for his shirt, set off across the tundra of the Australian ABC Radio website, searching the night for newts and news, trudging mile after mile for anything remotely Zappish, Zappoid or even faintly Zappesque. Unbelievably, there was actually something there—where the books and the rugs and the dust go to die—a very unlikely (but actually existent) ABC compact disc released in 2001, **Storm Sight**, which featured a piano solo version of Zappa's *Ruth Is Sleeping* as transcribed and performed by Australian pianist Michael Kieran Harvey.

Ruth Is Sleeping, Zappa's first written piece for Synclavier dates from the early 1980's. Referring to this composition on **The Yellow Shark** Zappa comments: *There's this version for solo piano which is very, very, very difficult, and there's **this** version for two pianos which is less difficult but still hard.* The ABC disc featured Harvey's transcription for one piano, two hands, which he had premiered (with ZFT assent) in Warsaw in 1995. His rendition—on the stunning Australian Stuart and Sons piano—*failed to disappoint.*

How could the lad's curiosity not be piqued and aroused, especially as further study of this phenomenon yielded yet more Zappa connections? Bookending the disc were the first and second piano sonatas by Australian composer Carl Vine. Harvey won the Ivo Pogorelich International Piano Competition in 1993 in Pasadena playing Vine's **Piano Sonata No.1**, a commission by the Sydney Dance Company, written specifically by Vine for Harvey and his phenomenal pianistic abilities (think Bozzio, but with both biceps still intact). Harvey had apparently entered this competition, not so much with the hope of winning (which he did) but with the hope of meeting Zappa and gaining his permission to perform his music. But winning was to be a meagre consolation: Zappa died on the day of the finals.

The second surprise was the gratifying discovery that coincidentally Harvey had moved to live in the same, small Australian city as the lad himself, and that Harvey gave occasional concerts at Hobart's Conservatorium of Music. As a consequence of the strictly low-budget advertising by the parent University, audience numbers were often small, sometimes no more than a paltry 20 or 30, with the majority of them clearly (unlike the lad) musicians or students of music. Considering his phenomenal skill and unmatched repertoire this was shocking. But Harvey seemed completely *unfettered*. The lad was very fortunate: not only did he get to hear first hand and at close quarters the premiere performance of several contemporary Australian compositions (all composers previously unknown to him), but this was also his first introduction to the music of Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Stefan Wolpe and Milton Babbitt played live. Not only was it quickly apparent that Harvey deliberately incorporated at least one reference to Zappa (or quotation by Zappa) in every concert, but he overlapped with Zappa in spirit: feisty, independent, unafraid to speak his mind, and possessed of a monumental work ethic, completely committed to championing and releasing the music which he gauged as worthwhile—regardless of whether or not it was currently fashionable. The music was in your face: undumbed, immediate, with no attempt to dilute the not infrequent unapprehensible complexities.

Zappa's appellation of *Lumpy Gravy* as *curiously inconsistent* is indeed curiously inconsistent if this piece does (and I think it does) represent his macroscopic output in Mikrokosmic form. Curiously inconsistent because Zappa was anything but. Take, for example, his consistent championing of Charles Ives which persisted from his earliest appearance as one of the names on **Freak Out!**, through the twisted reference to Ives' technique of simultaneously colliding marching bands on **Call Any Vegetable**, to directly referencing his name as a song title (**Charles Ives** on Disc 1 of **YCDTOSA Vol.5**), and continuing to the nether end of his lifetime in the sonic experiments he conducted with the Ensemble Modern in 1991: **The (Unanswered) Cluster 1A** patently references the title of Charles Ives' composition **The Unanswered Question**.

"but a boy's work, partly serious and partly in fun" Charles Ives (regarding *Variations on 'America'*)

Charles' Ivories

Variations on

[Mr] "Ermerica"

The Beautiful

"but a boy's

work,

Walk on

By

Sinister Footwear

America Drinks

partly

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serious

Läther

and

partly

(*And Winos Do Not* **March**)

Goes

Home

in fun"

The further Zappa connections with the **Storm Sight** disc—and these are admittedly somewhat oblique—are the Zappa/ Elliott Carter/Charles Ives connections. Elliott Carter met Charles Ives in his teens and Ives supported and encouraged him in his composing ambitions. Reciprocally—and many years later—Carter was instrumental in forming **The Ives Society**. Zappa himself was no Perfect Stranger to Carter's music, playing a record of his ***Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano*** over the airwaves in 1975. According to Ben Watson, Carter's musical influence can be audibly d'vined in the bovine perspiration on the upper lip area of **Läther**. Vine's ***Piano Sonata No.1*** itself draws on Elliott Carter's ***Piano Sonata*** of 1946. As Harvey

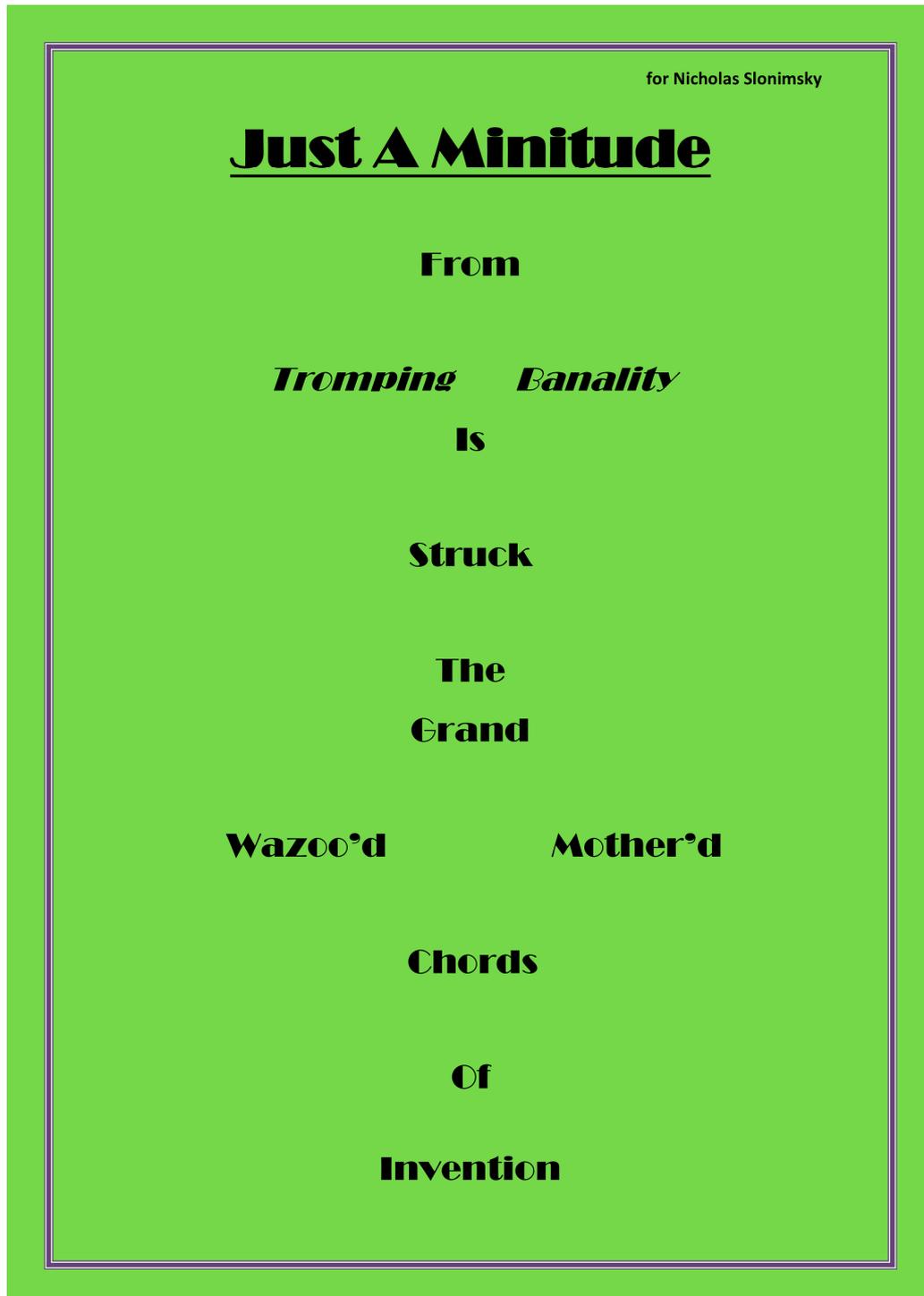
explains: *Drawing on the lithe beauty and contrapunctal elegance of the Elliott Carter **Piano Sonata** (1946), Vine's **Piano Sonata No.1** is a work characterized by intense rhythmic drive and the building up of layers of resonance. The scheme is similar to the Carter Sonata: two movements, with the slow section built into and defining the faster portions of the first movement.*

Return of the Son of Charles' Ivories

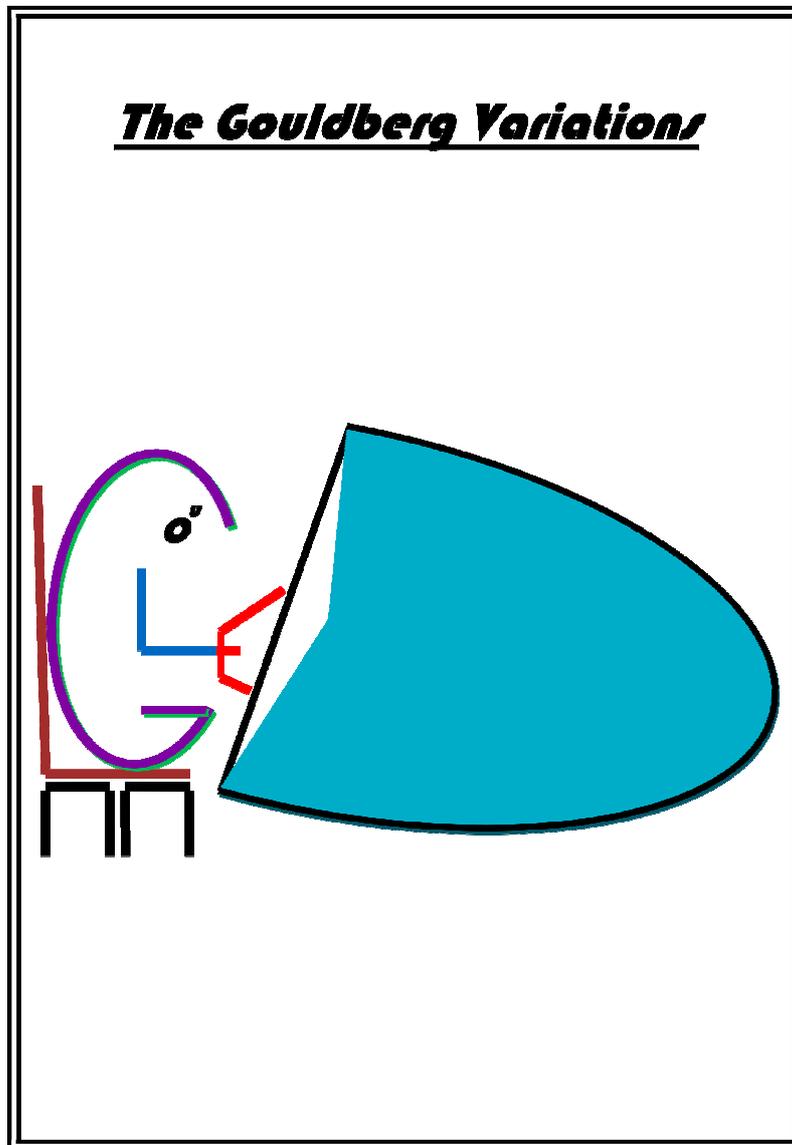
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On the 4th July 2010—coincidentally (but not inappropriately) American Independence Day—Harvey treated Hobartians to the redoubtable Nicholas Slonimsky's complete and irreverent **51 Minitudes** for piano, pieces of which Slonimsky himself had played when he guested with Zappa in 1981. Zappa meeting and playing with Slonimsky seemed preordained: the Grand Father of the Mothers of Invention Meets the Inventor of the Grandmother Chord.



Like Zappa, Harvey is an admirer of Glenn Gould. In an interview with Nigel Leigh in early 1993, Zappa remarked that he could only listen to some forms of classical music, such as the music of Bach, where the elements of unpredictability and surprise rendered it more tolerable, favourably commenting that Glenn Gould *twists the stuff so there's at least a question mark inserted into the composition*. "Zappa" apparently means "hoe", or "primitive garden utensil", and it seems just another happy fragment of cosmic debris that Harvey has collaborated with infamous Tasmanian environmentalist/gardener Peter Cundall in **The Well Tempered Garden**, twisting Bach even more laterally than Gould might ever have imagined.



The Carter/Zappa/Harvey connections refuse to die: Elliott Carter is one of the dedicatees of the 2011 Zappa release **Feeding the Monkeys At Ma Maison**—I hope he got to appreciate it before he moved on, biting the big one (at age 103) on the 5th of November 2012. Harvey cites his own very recent composition *Psychosonata* (2012) as influenced in part by Carter's *Night Fantasies*. Turning again, the title *Night Fantasies* evokes Zappa's **Sleep Dirt**.

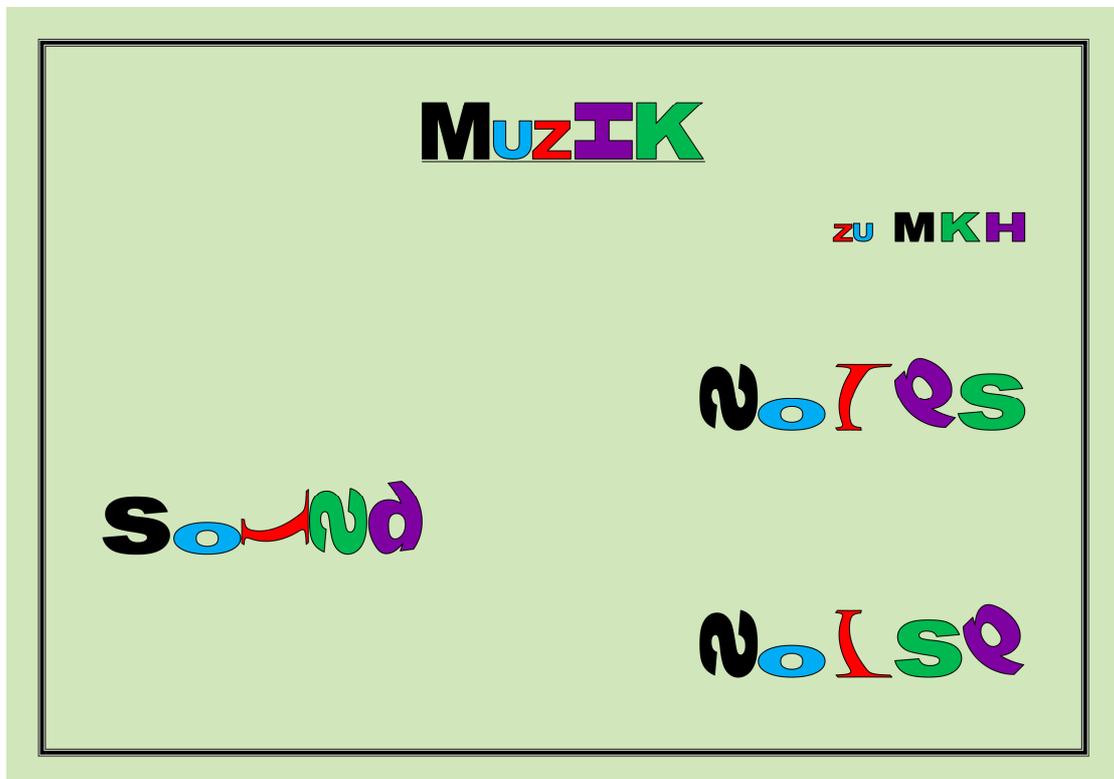
for NMB (All Over) and for Ruth Under ("Marimba") wood

Gray NapKins

RUTH
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The
FILTHY Black
Sleep Dirt
Sensation HABITS
Page
WE'RE
TURNING
Overnite
AGAIN

Aside from his massive and absolutely non-imitative homage to Zappa **48 Fugues for Frank** (2010), a composition that *in the opinion of this reporter* fully does justice to Zappa's instrumental complexity like none other around (and that includes Peter Eötvös' **Psalm 151**), Harvey continues his unabated *educatement of severely iggnint white folk*. As recently as November 2012, in the Peggy Glanville-Hicks New Music Address, <http://www.newmusicnetwork.com.au/pgh.html>, the annual forum for ideas relating to the creation and performance of Australian music, Harvey, who has never been one to merely shut up 'n' play his keyboard, delivered an impassioned and acerbic speech emphasizing the centrality of music to general education. His apt choice of insertionism re-quoted Frank Zappa's paraphrase of Harlan Ellison: *The commonest element in the universe is not hydrogen, but stupidity.*

Less common is Music. But—thus have I heard—*Music is the Best*. And that's the way we like it...



3. THE CRUX OF THE BISCUIT: Thing-Fish and conceptual continuity

Mary Halley

Zappadan is the traditional time for lending an ear to albums not much listened to during the rest of the year, and this year I decided I'd take Thing-Fish out for another good spin around the block. But though there are plenty of memorable musical moments in the album, it's still a tough job to make it through to the end in a single sitting. When it originally came out in 1984, I remember being upset that Zappa had 'recycled' so many songs (about one third of the total) already released on other albums. That alone stopped me listening to the album for years, feeling that I'd been short-changed. The content didn't help much either, what with the politically incorrect attacks on gays and feminists, and the outrageous suggestion that AIDS had been actually manufactured. Not exactly party material.

But recently I've found myself warming to individual songs as they've come up on shuffle trips through my iPod. Not just the ones I'd liked before like "That Evil Prince", "Brown Moses" and "Wistful Wit A Fistful", but the re-recordings of 'old' ones – "The Torchum Never Stops" and "You Are What You Is". Once you recover from the feeling of being short-changed (time is a great healer) and listen to them as if they were different versions from the YCDTOSA series, then they're actually not bad at all. In fact, it's astonishing to see the deftness with which they've been re-recorded and cut to fit a different cloth.

So I wondered what it was going to sound like to hear them all rolled together again as a single album. It must have been about five years since I'd last tried it, but I had a long car journey coming up and only myself for company – the perfect opportunity. And you know what? Suddenly it all made sense. It made sense as a show, first of all. You could actually imagine it in a theatrical context, outrageous as it is, and working. In fact, given the changes over the last nearly thirty years (my gosh, already!), it would probably be a hit just for that alone. Given the right set, I could see it being the toast of the West End, if not yet Broadway (America still has a bit further to travel down that road.)

But much more importantly, uncluttered by the baggage I had always brought to it, Zappa's intent came through to me more sharply than ever before. It's not a simple vision, to be sure. He's striking out at multiple targets that can confuse you if you try to isolate them. But there's a thread that comes through that is consistent. The AIDS thing, so diverting at the time, is merely a device, a sardonic set-up for the meat of the programme, which – as usual with Zappa – is an extravagant commentary on his favourite thesis that the ugliest part of the body is the mind. Nothing we can do physically (even the most grotesque deformations brought on by the machinations of the Evil Prince) can be as depraved as the mentality that makes it possible.

Essentially, Thing-Fish is a brutal assault on inauthenticity, brought to you by some of the most disgustingly inauthentic characters you could ever hope to meet. It's totally over the top, but then you don't come to Zappa for middle-of-the-road recreation. It's strong meat, but ultimately wholesome. And that's where the continuity lies, right there. It's in the intent, the steadfast application of a clear point of view to everything and anything that may happen, the "conceptual continuity of the output macrostructure". In a way, you can see Zappa's work as a form of therapy, an intensive de-bugging program both musical and intellectual that is out to put you straight on how to be yourself. In that sense, the 'recycling' of songs in Thing-Fish is just a restructuring of the basic building blocks to suit a different set of circumstances; just as Lather aims to expose the similarities in apparent disparity, or "Understanding America" links together songs that underscore Zappa's dystopian vision of the US and his recipe for surviving it. It's the same material, served differently – which not only allows you to see it in a new light, it might just leave you something more to chew on as you inch ever closer to the crux of the biscuit.



4. PTTAOSAGM: FZ and the OMG factor

Simon Prentis

One of the enduring pleasures of listening to Frank Zappa's music is that you can always be sure that there's another surprise waiting somewhere down the line. No matter how well you think you know the music, it seems you never exhaust the store of stones that turn to reveal an astonishing new connection hidden in plain sight, a little musical joke or reference that draws the whole edifice even tighter together, blowing you away when you discover it. It's almost as if you can hear FZ sniggering to himself in whatever corner of the space-time continuum he inhabits these days.

And it can happen like this: A few weeks back, my brother (also a Zappa fan) sent me a text message enquiring whether I was familiar with "a modest hit song from the 60s" called '*My Empty Room*' that he'd just happened to hear someone play on the radio. I was not. As the tone of his text suggested that he was onto something, I immediately googled '*My Empty Room*' and came up with this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eus0q7JNrs>

Not very promising, and not very like my brother either. It was quite puzzling, until I realized that I had the wrong decade (well, I was driving at the time...). Adding '1960' into the search criteria led me to another song called '*My Empty Room*', by a doo-wop group called *Little Anthony and the Imperials*. Though I'd never heard of them before, that sounded more likely – and sure enough, when I finally got a decent internet connection, I realized he'd hit pay dirt: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I53NUBqK0VI>

In fact I was so surprised I nearly drove off the road. What? The very melody that Don Preston (presumably it is he) plays at the end of *Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Sexually Aroused Gas Mask*. That was it? Did anybody know? Did Don Preston (famously not a fan of doo-wop) even know himself? And anyway, why that song? And come to think of it, what is the original title all about anyway? Not difficult to spot the connection with Debussy – *Prélude à*

l'après-midi d'un faune, a staple of music appreciation classes throughout the fifties and sixties, but however much sanctified by Pierre Boulez himself as 'the awakening of modern music' that doesn't explain why Zappa chose to reference it here. There is nothing about Zappa's composition that bears any apparent conceptual or structural resemblance to Debussy's composition, although it has been suggested that the opening melody is somewhat similar to what Don Preston is playing. But that's altogether too thin. Especially once you discover that what Don Preston plays is actually '*My Empty Room*'. So it can't be that.

I decided to investigate. It turns out that '*My Empty Room*' is itself a steal from a theme in the first movement of Tchaikovsky's 6th Symphony, the so-called "*Pathétique*". Listen up from 5.26 onward in this version (doing your best to avert your eyes from von Karajan's sexually-aroused penguin-in-bondage routine) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHAfvUFtCIY>). I think we can agree that Little Anthony is pretty much bang to rights here, barring a few grace notes. So was Zappa/Preston quoting Tchaikovsky, not Little Anthony? Well, perhaps; but then again, knowing what we do about Zappa's proclivities, it's highly unlikely – especially since the title is clearly sending up the Debussy, so he'd hardly be quoting another even less modern classical piece written six years earlier.

So what could it be? As you study this phenomenon, you discover that *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* is not some mood music about a sweet little Bambi frolicking in the woods, much as Disney might want you to think so. First of all, it's about a *faun*, not a fawn. And a faun (for those of us without the benefit of a classical education) is a mythical creature who is half-man and half-goat – and it's desire his eyes be rollin' with, not wide-eyed innocence.

Secondly, he's a horny little devil with just one thing on his mind: getting some action with the nymphs (Greek for '*hot chicks*') who also inhabit the forest glades, and are partial to skinny-dipping in those pools of shimmering water found in secluded groves 'n' such.



Now Debussy's music is apparently based on a poem by the famous French Symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé (stay with me, here). It describes in some detail the imaginary cavortment that might ensue in such a place – imaginary not just because it never happened in the first place, but because his particular faun has not got lucky. Hardly for want of trying, but he's failed to get some nookie: "*For I'd scarcely begun to hide an ardent laugh... Than from my arms, undone by vague dying, / This prey, forever ungrateful, frees itself and is gone*" (translation by A. S. Kline) The whole poem is a long, extended wail of sexual frustration dressed up as classical decorum.

So what has that got to do with "*My Empty Room*"? Well, everything, as it turns out. In case you didn't catch them as you were listening just now, the lyrics go like this:

*Why must I sit here in my empty room
Why did you leave me darling, oh so soon
Was it a game dear
Am I to blame dear
You're memory lingers on like sweet perfume...
Every time you'd touch me
I would chill
Every kiss you gave me
Was a thrill*

*I sit here in my empty room and cry
My heart is breaking since you said goodbye
Oh how it's yearning
Oh how it's burning
I need you oh so much that I could die
Please set me free dear
Come back to me dear
Don't leave me here dear
In my empty room*

By now I probably don't need to point out that this is a pretty good summary of the essence of Mallarmé's poem. And much more than that, it's a whole lot more honest. And given Uncle Frank's irrepressible satirical tendencies... well, what a gift of a song to send up the classical pretensions he so despised.

Really? Are you serious? Can Zappa have gone to all the trouble of researching that and sticking it under the rock of a throwaway moment at the end of one of his less well-known (or listened-to) compositions? Well, perhaps he'd just found it out, like me, out of curiosity. Besides, in what other way does it make sense to call the track *Prelude to the Afternoon of A Sexually Aroused Gas Mask*? The gas mask, of course, symbolic of Zappa's less-than-idyllic childhood amid the stores of poison gas his family lived next door to. The gas mask, of course, classical apparatus for sexual fetishists, being manipulated here alas by the now-serially-convicted paedophile Roy Estrada, a man clearly no stranger to frustrated sexual arousal. But Debussy? There's no other plausible link beyond the random, and Zappa didn't do random.

Then there's the cryptic "Blow your harmonica, son", the conceptual continuity clue Zappa tosses casually into the mix as Don plays the *My Empty Room* melody. Is he just encouraging the general mayhem, or is it a knowing nod to the ancient myth on which Mallarmé's poem is originally based, the story of the god Pan's attempt to seduce the beautiful nymph Syrinx – wherein it is

written that just as Pan has caught Syrinx, fellow nymphs come to her rescue and magically turn her into a sheaf of reeds, whereupon in his sigh of regret at losing Syrinx, Pan breathes air into the reeds and discovers – what else? – the Beauty of Music. Which is exactly the moment at which the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* begins, with the plaintive tones of a flute: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_7loz-HWUM. *Blow yer pan-pipes, son.*

Far-fetched? Of course. But, to quote the famous MOI customized press kit:

Imagine the head of a pin. On the head of this pin is an amazingly detailed illustration of some sort. It might be a little thought or a feeling or, perhaps, an obscure symbol. It might just be a picture of a sky or something with birds in it... but it's on the head of this pin, remember, and it's infinitely detailed. Now, imagine this pin is not a pin...it's a musical note with a corresponding physical action, like the secret raising of an eyebrow to add special emphasis. Even in a recording studio where nobody can see you.

Now, imagine enough of these abstracted pins (with the needle part chopped off to save space) to fill an area as large as the North American Continent and most of Central Europe, piled to a depth of 80 feet. Now, imagine this area is not geometric space. Imagine a collection of decades (the exact number to be disclosed eventually). Pause.

The reason for explaining this process is to simply let you know it exists, and to give you, as an executive, some criteria by which to rationally judge what we do. It is not fair to our group to review detail aspects of our work without considering the *placement* of a detail in the larger structure.

And Little Anthony and the *Imperials*, too? I rest my case.

5. ZAPPA SURVIVOR PART II

Scott Schroen

Another FZ use of odd numbers is melody lines that are straight 5s (quintuplets)

Zomby Woof = 5 beats of 5 notes 1 beat rest and then play it all exactly backwards



Echidnas Arf = symmetrical 5 note pattern leading to a descending E Phrygian scale, repeat the symmetrical pattern then extend the scale for a smooth transition into another 5 note rhythm series that I interpreted in analysis as overlapping arpeggios which leads to octaves on C before repeating the entire section.



...and then the whole thing becomes more of an intro for Don't You Ever Wash That Thing, which has another common FZism and that is 'count the rests'.

Bar of 2/8 - bar of 5/8 rest = dun dun / 1 2 3 4 5

Bar of 2/4 – bar of 5/8 rest = dadada dun / 1 2 3 4 5

Bar of 5/8 – bar of 5/8 rest = daa dadadadada dun / 1 2 3 4 5 repeat

Andy is another great example of this;

Starting at 0:24 the 'space/rest' count pattern is; 3 7 3 3 5 3 8

Is there anything good inside of you if there is I really wanna know (3/16)

Is there anything good inside of you (7/16)

if there is I really wanna (3/16) know (3/16)

Is there anything (5/16) good inside of you if there is I really wanna (3/16)

know (8/16)

“Is there”

Here are a few easy odd number grooves;

Outside Now = $6/8+5/8=11/8$ – feels like 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 3



Deathless Horsie = 5/8 – feels like 1 2 3 4 5



Filthy Habits = 5/4 – feels like 1 2 3 4 5 and



Performing the music of Frank Zappa in a 3 piece rock band situation presents some obvious problems and difficulties and we will not do any material that we cannot cover with the people in the band at any specific time. There have been players in the band that can do Bass / Keys / Vocals or Drums / Bell kit / Percussion / Vocals simultaneously thus adhering to the 'no idle pinky' policy. There are times when we are covering up to 9 different musical parts with only 3 people.

Fine Girl is an easy example of how I arrange my parts;

Fine Girl

bouncy reggae

Keys

Verse C D C D

Fine Girl = no idle pinky (or vocal cord)

Count in: Guitar plays electric piano part and sing Ike's parts... "Well" "Yeah"

Verses = hybrid reggae guitar C - D and sing the Frank parts

1:14 (intro) piano parts/vocals - continue verses - sing the Frank parts

2:45 guitar plays hybrid keys/bass/guitar part – begin overlapping vocals

Actual part sounds like;

Voc 1} we need some more like (that) in this kinda tow'in

Voc 2} We need (some more) like that

So my part is;

We need some more like we need in this kinda tow'in like that

Actual part sounds like;

We need some more like (that) in this kinda tow'in

(In this kind of tow'in)

Voc 3} we need some more like [that] [this] kinda tow'in

So my part is;

We need some more like we need some more like in this kinda tow'in kinda tow'in

again. Possibly the best response I got was from a drummer who said, 'play drums in a Zappa band?! HELL NO, I have a family.'

I, on the other hand, seem to be born for this and it seems that I was maybe like 10 years too late to actually be in a band with FZ so URR is the next best thing. We strive to keep the standard of 'We are FZs band, he just never got to meet us.' It is such an honor and positive experience to be able to travel around and perform such amazing music for people who understand it and truly appreciate it on several different levels. My hope for the future of URR is to keep doing more across a wider area of the globe.

(Ugly Radio Rebellion - Atlanta, GA USA)

