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### Original Citation

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**'INCA ROADS' - THE MUSICAL WORLDS OF FRANK ZAPPA**

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**MA by Research**

**Awarded by The University of Huddersfield**

**Resubmission August 2011**

# 'Inca Roads' - The Musical Worlds of Frank Zappa

Benjamin Wall

## Introduction

Zappa's importance lies less in any obvious influence on rock music than in the way in which his music embraces American popular culture while simultaneously maintaining a critical distance from it, and in the way in which his musical critique at the same time constitutes a political and social critique. He saw the music business as concerned with the manipulation of music and its consumers and dedicated to profit. His own material is always calculatedly secondhand, disposable and ephemeral; his approach to structuring it is critical, ironic and self-reflective. The result has a richness of allusion, wealth of detail and a consistency of thought reminiscent of James Joyce.<sup>1</sup>

Describing what he did for a living, Zappa said, "*what I do is composition.*" I just happen to use material other than *notes* for the pieces.<sup>2</sup> As a 'composer' he is difficult to define. He represents a dichotomy between the high art of classical music and the more accessible world of popular music. Zappa represents 'the civilizing of the barbarian/artist,'<sup>3</sup> by working in both and yet neither genre Zappa was 'attacking the entrenched critical and academic establishments whose members distinguished categorically between art and popular music.'<sup>4</sup>

This thesis asks what the key influences on Zappa's compositional style were, taking 'Inca Roads'<sup>5</sup> as a case study, and trying to define the focus of Zappa's compositional style. It asks whether Zappa can be regarded as a 'composer' in a western art music sense, or as an 'artist' in the popular music sense. It does not explicitly investigate whether Zappa was a modernist or postmodernist, this thesis is too short for an in depth discussion of postmodernity. This would be a suitable subject for further work, however, the breakdown

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<sup>1</sup> Paddison, Max, "Zappa, Frank", *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, (Accessed 22 August 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 139.

<sup>3</sup> Doerstuck, Robert L., *Keyboard*, 'The Zappa Legacy', April 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Borders, James, 'Form and the Concept Album: Aspects of Modernism in Frank Zappa's Early Releases', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Winter, 2001), 118-160; 119.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

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of the boundary between pop and high art is a key element of postmodernity and is a key issue here.

This thesis seeks to answer the above research questions, exploring the musical worlds of Frank Zappa, both popular and classical, how he was influenced by them and how they manifest in his work up to and including the release of the song 'Inca Roads'<sup>6</sup> from *One Size Fits All*.<sup>7</sup> 'Inca Roads' has been chosen as it marks a key point in the development of Zappa's career. It represents the first time he fully combined his array of stylistic influences into something musically adventurous yet commercially accessible. *One Size Fits All* was an album that excited Zappa and demonstrates a relentless pursuit of musical exploration. Zappa said of the period, 'I was in the studio for four months, ten to twelve hours a day, and by god did I want people to hear this thing.'<sup>8</sup>

The question of whether Zappa was a composer or an artist needs addressing as the world in which he worked at a given time is key to understanding the effect of his satire and attempts to push the boundaries of a given genre. Subversion is stronger when working from within. Zappa had the facility to be regarded as one or the other depending on the style of music he was working in. As an artist who worked predominantly in the popular medium he had the ability to progress the limits of the genre more successfully, the image of an artist also allowed him to work in a variety of media formats, it also helped to maintain an accessible image which was commercially successful. However, if working formally as a composer, he could be taken more seriously critically yet he could risk alienating his populist fan base.

The thesis begins with a discussion of Zappa's work up to this point starting with an overview of Zappa's early life and influences. This is then followed by an examination of his musical approach over five key periods of his output, these periods are defined by the bands he was working with at each time. These periods show Zappa's compositional development, exploring different styles and approaches taken from an array of varying

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Courrier, Kevin, *The Dangerous Kitchen: The Subversive World of Zappa*, (London, 2002), 274.

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influences. Individual albums are drawn upon within these periods to illustrate his changing musical approach and show the catalysts that caused these broad changes in style. These different musical periods show how Zappa experimented with different musical styles in relative isolation, styles that were combined in composing 'Inca Roads'.

Following this section, is an exploration of how the individual members of his bands directly influenced his compositions. These sections provide a contextual platform for the next section, an analysis of 'Inca Roads'. In order to use this track as a case study, a detailed transcription of 'Inca Roads' had to be undertaken and a full score produced [see appendix C] which can furthermore be referenced directly in the analysis. The process of transcription itself was vital to the analysis, as complex details emerged in the music that would not have been recognized without the aid of a score. No score of 'Inca Roads' was available, indeed there are very few scores of Zappa's music available, particularly in a full band score format. Those that are, for example *Hot Rats* and *Apostrophe*, are aimed at guitarists, providing only the guitar and vocal parts with occasional adaptations for guitar of key melodies played on other instruments such as saxophone or organ. It was vital in order to appreciate the intricate detail of Zappa's compositional technique, to be able to relate different parts and sections of the music in detail. The lack of scores of Zappa's music provided an additional reason to transcribe the track. The aim, aside from analysis, was to contribute to the limited musical resources available, particularly as the track is from an album highly regarded among fans,<sup>9</sup> furthermore, the score will be submitted to the Zappa Family Trust for evaluation.

The case study, through the use of a detailed study score, facilitates the examination of the confluence of influences and musical development of his work as a composer. The musical background and individual skills of the musicians in his employ, the sociocultural climate and his own financial situation, all influenced his aesthetic decisions. Zappa adapted to his individual situation at the conception of each project. By refusing to pigeonhole his work as either popular or art music, Zappa maintained a critical distance from both musical worlds, and this position allowed him to direct his critique of music, society and culture.

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<sup>9</sup> A poll held by *T'Mershi Duween*, No. 7, June 1989, made *One Size Fits All* a 'runaway winner'.

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To conduct a thorough analysis of 'Inca Roads' the song was transcribed from the original record to create a study score, the only exclusion in the score being the omission of the improvised guitar and keyboard solos as they differed in every recording and performance of the track. The transcription (see appendix C), was deemed necessary due to Zappa's classical influences and complex experimental processes. The musical detail in the composition is sufficient to warrant such a detailed score. The transcription process itself provided a clearer understanding of how each individual component of the track interacts with the rest.

As 'Inca Roads' is popular music, the analysis cannot be conducted by isolating the musical and cultural issues.

It has become abundantly clear that to treat popular music as simply another activity (something else that is 'popular', that people indulge in) and to restrict oneself to investigating its institutions and practices is not sufficient for, as music, it appears to hold such a qualitatively distinct place in our lives. It has become equally clear that to treat popular music as simply another genre (as simply another sort of 'music' that people listen to) and to make use of the techniques developed for the study of the bourgeois music canon, is simply insufficient.<sup>10</sup>

The sociocultural context of this music is thus considered, particularly as a representation of, or reaction to, the culture in which it is entrenched. Zappa's music is influenced by many circumstances, often relating to the commercial or cultural. Zappa was a shrewd business person, he capitalised on the burgeoning counterculture scene of the 1960s, assimilating the requisite credentials to become part of the LA 'Freak' scene and thus launch his career. He both used and abused the counterculture, attacking it from within before alienating it in the early 1970s with an integration of accessible elements, which disguised its more cerebral content. This progression and Zappa's situation at the time of composition profoundly influenced 'Inca Roads' and therefore, is considered in the process of the analysis.

The analysis itself is conducted under a number of headings designed to focus on specific elements of Zappa's compositional process and influence. The aim is to demonstrate that through the combination of different techniques and influences, that 'Inca Roads' transcends any specific influence and represents the culmination of Zappa's development up to that point, capturing the many facets of his style. The analysis focuses on a number

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<sup>10</sup> Moore, Allan F., 'Introduction', in *Analyzing Popular Music* ed. Moore, Allan F (Cambridge, 2003), 2.

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of different areas, including the semantic meanings of the title 'Inca Roads'; lyrical form; humour and self-referentiality; polyrhythms and rhythmic confusion; transformation; challenging virtuosity; similarity to progressive rock and classical influence; improvisation; and structure. This is followed by a short analysis of the presentation of the album, the frame that packages the music, in particular the album art work that was intended to compliment and augment the meanings of the music. The various strands of this analysis are summarised before finally moving on to a section that aims to draw conclusions from the analysis of 'Inca Roads', and from the examination of Zappa's career up to that point, in the process answering the research questions outlined already.

Those who refuse to reexamine the rules of art pursue successful careers in mass conformism by communicating, by means of the 'correct rules', the endemic desire for reality with objects and situations capable of gratifying it.<sup>11</sup>

Zappa's work challenged 'the rules' in everything he touched, through subversion, parody, self-referentiality, pastiche and allegory, all hallmarks of postmodernity.<sup>12</sup> He furthermore reexamined his own rules, pursuing success through a level of commercial conformity and media manipulation, whilst using this as a guise for subversive sociocultural satire.

### **Frank Zappa**

Frank Zappa was born in 1940 in Baltimore, Maryland, moving to Northern California around the age of ten because of health concerns. The young Zappa's musical beginnings were around the age of twelve when he became interested in the drums. 'It wasn't my idea to be a rock and roll drummer or anything like that, because rock and roll hadn't been invented yet. I was just interested in the sounds of things a person could beat on.'<sup>13</sup> Starting with orchestral percussion, by 1956 he was playing in a high school R&B band called The Ramblers.

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<sup>11</sup> Lyotard, Jean Francois, 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', in *Postmodernism: A Reader* ed. Docherty, Thomas, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 41.

<sup>12</sup> Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 132.

<sup>13</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 29.

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The first album to capture the imagination of the young Zappa was *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Volume 1*,<sup>14</sup> particularly because of the piece *Ionisation*.<sup>15</sup> Zappa discovered *Varèse* as a result of an article in *Look* magazine,<sup>16</sup> contrasting his own reaction with that of the magazine, "This album is nothing but drums - it's dissonant and terrible. The worst music in the world." Ahh! Yes! That's for me!<sup>17</sup> *Varèse's* music became one of Zappa's most important influences, adopting *Varèse's* spirit of experimentation. *Varèse's* music became something of an obsession for Zappa, 'all through high school I searched for information about *Varèse* and his music.'<sup>18</sup> Zappa gives *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Volume 1*<sup>19</sup> special significance by referring to it specifically as 'The Album'.

In order to listen to *The Album*, I had to stay in my room. I would sit there every night and play it two or three times and read the liner notes over and over. I didn't understand them at all. I didn't know what *timbre* was. I never heard of *polyphony*. I just liked the music because it sounded good to me. I would force anybody who came over to listen to it.<sup>20</sup>

Zappa's musical education was conducted mostly under his own tutelage, he devoured music and experimented by writing music of his own. 'I started writing so-called serious music, or non-rock'n'roll music about the time I was fourteen, and I didn't write anything that even resembled rock'n'roll or rhythm and blues till I was twenty.'<sup>21</sup> He was allowed to write music for his school orchestra and to conduct, a skill that would resurface with the recording of his debut album *Freak Out!*<sup>22</sup>. Guitarist and founding member of The Mothers Of Invention, Elliot Ingber recalls:

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<sup>14</sup> Edgard *Varèse*, *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Volume 1*, Naxos 8554820 (1950).

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 'Ionisation'

<sup>16</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Edgard Varese: The Idol of My Youth', *Stereo Review*, (June, 1971), 61-62.

<sup>17</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 31.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>19</sup> Edgard *Varèse*, *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Volume 1*, Naxos 8554820 (1950).

<sup>20</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Edgard Varèse: The Idol of My Youth,' *Stereo Review*, (June, 1971), 61-62.

<sup>21</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>22</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, *Freak Out!*, Rykodisc 10501 (1967).



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When we were recording *Freak Out* there were all these first call studio musicians, with some extra percussion. [It] comes time to record and Frank steps up onto a podium of all things, and he conducts these guys with the certainty of, you know he could really do it. I said, "where'd you learn all this stuff man," he said, "oh, I went to the library."<sup>23</sup>

The only 'formal' training Zappa received were harmony classes from a jazz trumpeter, 'I don't think he enjoyed harmony very much either,'<sup>24</sup> remarked Zappa. Given Walter Piston's *Harmony*<sup>25</sup> to study, Zappa's response was to question the text, 'After you complete it you'll sound like everybody else who used the same rules. So I learned all of the basic stuff and then chucked the rest of it.'<sup>26</sup>

The early influences of the young Frank Zappa show how he would go on to define his later musical style. Whilst learning the necessary 'rules' of classical music in order to progress, he had a predilection for rebellion. He absorbed music from both the popular and classical musical worlds and would later straddle the fence between them in his own music, using attributes from both to create something new. He would take structure, arrangements and technical detail from classical music, and combine them with instrumentation, commercial potential and cultural content from popular music. Influenced by both musical worlds whilst belonging to neither allowed him to embrace 'American popular culture while simultaneously maintaining a critical distance from it.'<sup>27</sup> This approach is embedded within Zappa's music at its core, a musical, political and social critique. As Zappa himself tells us,

'Without deviation (from the norm), "**progress**" is not possible,' in order for one to deviate successfully, one has to have at least a passing acquaintance with whatever norm, one expects to deviate from.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>24</sup> Morgenstern, Joe, 'Democracy's Pitchman', *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, (October 30, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> Piston, Walter, *Harmony*, (New York, 1941).

<sup>26</sup> Morgenstern, Joe, 'Democracy's Pitchman', *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, (October 30, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Paddison, Max, "Zappa, Frank." *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, (Accessed 22 August, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 185.

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The sections that follow seek to illustrate how Zappa's compositional style developed and changed between different groups of albums, he moved between the roles of composer and artist. These groups are defined by the band he was working with at each time, he moved from one band lineup to another depending on a number of external circumstances that influenced these shifts. Here follows a chronological exploration of some of the most significant albums within these periods, albums which help to define the key elements of his developing and often drastically changing style, under the headings defined by the different bands he had backing him. The headings are as follows; The Mothers Of Invention, solo albums; Flo & Eddie; confined to a wheelchair; and DiscReet Records. There is also a brief discussion of the song 'Camarillo Brillo',<sup>29</sup> the aim of which is to demonstrate a shift to accessible and commercial popular music. As discussed, this examination of key periods of Zappa's output provides context to the analysis of 'Inca Roads' during the latter half of this thesis, showing the development of his compositional style. Whilst often disparate musically, these different musical periods were linked through his theory of 'conceptual continuity', which was designed to give a sense of unity across his wider body of work. A common theme across his music is, despite widely varying styles, that in every style he worked with, he undermined the normal rules of each style to push for something musically adventurous and provocative through subversion.

### The Mothers Of Invention

Zappa clearly relished the conflicting images he projected as rock musician and knowledgeable observer or practitioner of art music. This posture allowed him to remain an outsider in both fields (rock musician who employed the language of art music; practitioner of art music who played rock) while capitalizing on the cultural hegemony of art music to create an ironic distance between himself and other rock musicians, and assert the superiority of his cultural sophistication and musicianship.<sup>30</sup>

At eighteen Zappa became obsessed with R&B records and also began to learn to play the guitar. He and Don Van Vliet (later Captain Beefheart) would, for example, 'listen for hours on end to obscure hits by Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Guitar Slim, Johnny "Guitar" Watson etc.'<sup>31</sup> Using money earned through writing the score for budget Western *Run*

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<sup>29</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>30</sup> Grier, James, 'The Mothers of Invention and "Uncle Meat": Alienation, Anachronism and a Double Variation', *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 73, (2001), 77-95. 78.

<sup>31</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 37.

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*Home Slow*,<sup>32</sup> his first paying project, Zappa bought a studio in Cucamonga, and named it Studio Z. This studio would act as a home base for experimentation, 'beginning a life of obsessive overdubbing - non-stop twelve hours a day,<sup>33</sup> with the then-new, multitrack tape recording system. Whilst developing recording and producing skills that would heavily influence his music for the rest of his career, Studio Z was also central in his joining bar-band The Soul Giants. Following Zappa's suggestion that they play original material, the band became The Mothers, and later The Mothers Of Invention, the last two words of the band name being added at record company insistence to disguise the profane reference to 'motherfuckers'. This is an early example of Zappa's acceptance of some level of commercial manipulation, albeit based on the premise that being anti-commercial could sell records.

The Mothers Of Invention's 1967 debut record *Freak Out!*, the first ever double-album debut by any artist or band, 'was designed to inject a viral dose of intelligence, realism and antagonism into pop,<sup>34</sup> expressing Zappa's satirical perception of American popular culture. Zappa's music drew upon his social and political awareness. This was evident in the music and lyrics of the album. For example 'Trouble Every Day'<sup>35</sup> details the Watts Riots of 1965, primary lyrical themes being racial violence, social injustice and sensationalist journalism. However, also present is an intentional manipulation of band image and the media for commercial gain.

Before a record deal was even a distant notion, Zappa's analysis of the band was that, 'we didn't have long hair, we didn't have band uniforms and we were ugly as fuck. We were, in the Biblical sense of the word, UNEMPLOYABLE.'<sup>36</sup> Zappa set out to rectify this by exploiting the burgeoning counterculture scene emerging in Los Angeles, the freak phenomenon. He was interested in 'conscious counterculture, an extension of the beat bohemianism that has been eclipsed unduly by flower power.'<sup>37</sup> *Freak Out!* aimed to put

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<sup>32</sup> Brenner, Ted, dir., Zappa, Frank, comp., *Run Home Slow*, (1965).

<sup>33</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 43.

<sup>34</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 10.

<sup>35</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, 'Trouble Every Day', *Freak Out!*, Rykodisc 10501 (1967).

<sup>36</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 66.

<sup>37</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 33.

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the movement on the map, Zappa preferring the freaks to the hippies whom he found 'conformist and stupid.'<sup>38</sup> To achieve this goal, The Mothers Of Invention were a carefully calculated, carefully packaged product, to merge, chameleon-like into the counterculture. Control over the band's image was vital and overt.

The appearance of a group is linked to the music the same way an album cover is linked to the record. It gives a clue to what's inside. And the better the packaging, the more the person who picked up that package will enjoy it.<sup>39</sup>

Zappa's entrepreneurial influences, targeting a niche in the market that straddled the gap between 'serious' and 'popular' music, included the creation of a Mothers' mythology, a cast of eccentric characters for the audience to identify with and, most importantly, to buy into. A particular example of this is the creation of the dadaist concept 'Suzy Creamcheese'<sup>40</sup> a fictional character whose letters feature on album artwork.

The world was introduced to Suzy Creamcheese on the back cover. Her letter, written by Frank, was composed of sentences designed to attract the album's 'freak' audience and repulse symbols of authority.<sup>41</sup>

Zappa's exploitation of 'freak' culture highlighted its existence to the wider world. The illusion that his music and image were anti-commercial is an example of Zappa's calculated commercialism, 'predicated on the idea of how oppositional, non-conformist, *freaky* culture could attract attention and sell records.'<sup>42</sup> Even the presumptuous notion of naming the band The Mothers, or rather The Motherfuckers, at the time inferring that they were a spectacularly good group of musicians, appears a calculated marketing ploy. Years later Zappa would acknowledge this, 'we weren't that good musicians ... but by bar-band standards in the area, we were light-years ahead of our competition ... but in terms of real musicianship, I just suppose we were right down there in the swamp.'<sup>43</sup> Zappa would use this 'noncommercial,' outsider image to his advantage for the rest of his career.

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Leigh, Nigel, interview with Frank Zappa for, *BBC2: The Late Show*, Utility Muffin Research Kitchen, LA, (March, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, *Freak Out!*, Rykodisc 10501 (1967).

<sup>41</sup> Slaven, Neil, *Electric Don Quixote: The Definitive Story of Frank Zappa*, (London, 1996), 61.

<sup>42</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 9.

<sup>43</sup> Leigh, Nigel, interview with Frank Zappa for, *BBC2: The Late Show*, Utility Muffin Research Kitchen, LA, (March, 1993).

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In 1967, The Mothers' six month residency<sup>44</sup> at the Garrick Theatre, New York, performing six days a week and two shows a night was 'crucial because it gave him a laboratory to work on not just the music itself but the notion of performance and interaction with the crowd.'<sup>45</sup> The concerts would often transcend the standard 'rock concert' form, becoming more like artistic 'events,' integrating musical satire, social commentary, and semi-rehearsed, play-acted pastiches, as Borders tells us, 'the groups appearances anticipated performance art.'<sup>46</sup> The improvised nature of the performances, based on key building blocks, 'certain items, the noises, the songs, the cues for the songs and noises,'<sup>47</sup> was controlled by hand signals. This was a technique Zappa would continue to use with his live bands throughout his career to transform a track spontaneously and keep each concert totally unique. The controlled chaos of his concerts allowed for the free-flowing evolution of many of Zappa's tracks, later appearing on subsequent albums. The increasingly refined art-rock of The Mothers Of Invention, continued over the next several years, Zappa drawing on their outsider, freaks, image to fortify the groups countercultural credentials.

The Mothers' third album *We're Only In It For The Money*,<sup>48</sup> the cover art of which (shown below) was a parody of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band*,<sup>49</sup> was designed to satirize many aspects of 1960s culture. The title, combined with the cover art, deliberately references The Beatles. This is Zappa's self-referential commentary on the early days of The Mothers, about which he tells us, 'the only way to get gigs was to have long or Beatle-esque hair, or to incorporate the word *Beatles* into the band name somehow.'<sup>50</sup> Despite *We're Only In It For The Money's* seemingly commercial presentation, the album opens and closes with two pieces of musique concrète, 'Are You

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<sup>44</sup> March 23<sup>rd</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup> 1967.

<sup>45</sup> Fricke, David, interviewed for Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe* ('), (2007).

<sup>46</sup> Borders, James, 'Form and the Concept Album: Aspects of Modernism in Frank Zappa's Early Releases', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Winter, 2001), 118-160; 121-122.

<sup>47</sup> Hopkins, Jerry, interviewed, Zappa, Frank in, 'The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, (July 20, 1968).

<sup>48</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, *We're Only In It For The Money*, Rykodisc 10503 (1968).

<sup>49</sup> The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Apple (1967).

<sup>50</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 66.

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Hung Up?'<sup>51</sup> and 'The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny.'<sup>52</sup> The latter, closing the album, parodies the minute long triple-piano chord ending to the Beatles' 'A Day In The Life.'<sup>53</sup>



The Mothers Of Invention albums continued with this approach, as outlets for satirical political commentary. Two of the albums, *Burnt Weeny Sandwich*<sup>54</sup> and *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*<sup>55</sup> were released after Zappa had dissolved what remained of The Mothers Of Invention lineup, and consisted of previously recorded tracks. The former album showcased the band in the studio, with more structured compositions, whilst the latter focuses on The Mothers in a live setting, featuring frenetic and chaotic improvisation owing much to avant-garde free jazz.

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<sup>51</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, 'Are You Hung Up?', *We're Only In It For The Money*, Rykodisc 10503. (1968).

<sup>52</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, 'The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny', *We're Only In It For The Money*, Rykodisc 10503. (1968).

<sup>53</sup> The Beatles, 'A Day In The Life', *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Apple (1967).

<sup>54</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, *Burnt Weeny Sandwich*, Rykodisc 10509 (1969).

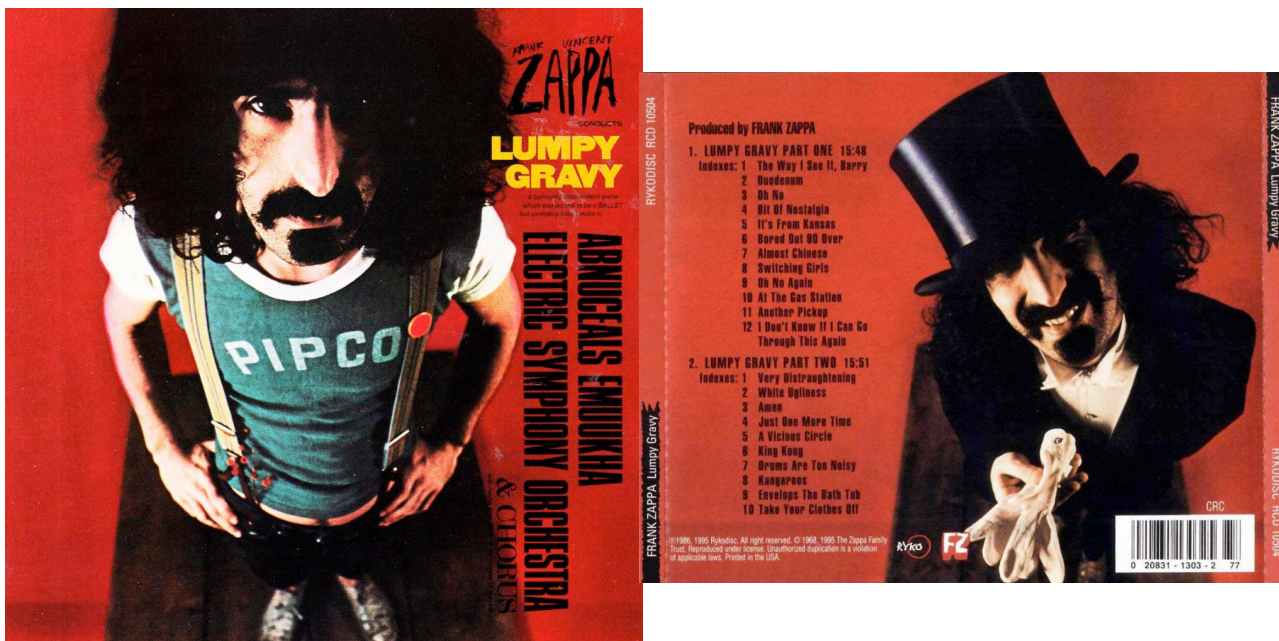
<sup>55</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, *Weasels Ripped My flesh*, Rykodisc 10510 (1970).

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### Solo Albums

While continuing to use The Mothers' albums to attack popular culture, striking out at the flower-power movement, lampooning the hippies he considered inferior to the LA freaks, Zappa also began writing music as a solo artist. Despite quoting Edgard Varèse as saying 'the present-day composer refuses to die' on the album covers of his first several albums, popular music influences remained dominant in this period of his work, so far 'his talent for outrage had obscured his skills as a composer.'<sup>56</sup> Whilst The Mothers' albums have compositional merit, it is Zappa's efforts outside of The Mothers that demonstrate his ability to access a broader array of styles. Presenting this music as compositions that were usually instrumental (rather than songs), lent a sense of art music authenticity to his work, in contrast to the overtly commercial approach of The Mothers Of Invention albums. Discarding The Mothers Of Invention name, Zappa's solo albums mark the beginning of a more serious, formalised approach to composition with a lesser emphasis on commercial manipulation.<sup>57</sup>

Zappa's first solo effort, *Lumpy Gravy*,<sup>58</sup> shares many stylistic similarities with *We're Only In It For The Money*, indeed the back cover of the original vinyl release pictures Zappa in tuxedo and top hat with speech bubble asking 'Is this phase 2 of *We're Only In It For The*



<sup>56</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 140-141.

<sup>58</sup> Frank Zappa, *Lumpy Gravy*, Rykodisc 10504 (1967).

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*Money?*<sup>59</sup> The album presents a juxtaposition of pop-art and high-brow influences, reflected again in the cover art (shown above), Zappa is depicted in a t-shirt on one side and top hat, tails and gloves on the other. 'Zappa was concerned with a dichotomy between what could be called the "symphonic-modern" and the "pop-song-commercial,"<sup>60</sup> moving on a continuum between the two during his career. *Lumpy Gravy* is a clear sign of this position, blending his influences together, a signifier that he wished to be regarded as a composer, regardless of musical hemisphere. The 'Abnuceals Emuukha Electric Symphony Orchestra & Chorus,<sup>61</sup> was formed for the album, containing separate personnel to The Mothers to differentiate it as a solo effort, the name itself blending the 'popular' and 'classical'.

*Lumpy Gravy* was more musically sophisticated than *We're Only In It For The Money?*, however 'whichever way you look at it, *Lumpy Gravy* was begging for commercial rejection. Many of its procedures: collage, fragmentation, parody, humor, and documentary, have since become requisites in 'postmodern' music academies.<sup>62</sup>

His next solo effort was the album *Hot Rats*,<sup>63</sup> his first since he dissolved The Mothers Of Invention, continues the musically adventurous role he explored with *Lumpy Gravy*, this time however working in a jazz-fusion idiom featuring extended soloing and with vocals absent, with the exception of Captain Beefheart's evocative growl on 'Willie The Pimp.'<sup>64</sup> Devoid of lyrics, and without the vocal satire, *Hot Rats* was more melodically accessible than The Mothers Of Invention material, consequently, the album become a particular hit in Europe. 'His lyrics and spoken word [on previous albums] had been barriers to his acceptance (this helps explain Zappa's cult following in Europe, for non-English speakers, his words are less disruptive).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, cover art.

<sup>60</sup> Ashby, Arved, 'Frank Zappa and the Anti-Fetishist Orchestra', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), 557-606; 558.

<sup>61</sup> Frank Zappa, *Lumpy Gravy*, Rykodisc 10504 (1967).

<sup>62</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 13.

<sup>63</sup> Frank Zappa, *Hot Rats*, Rykodisc 10508 (1969).

<sup>64</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Willie The Pimp,' *Hot Rats*, Rykodisc 10508 (1969).

<sup>65</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 20.



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Through his solo albums Zappa was free to explore the music he wanted to write without the musical expectations associated with the Mothers Of Invention name. He was able to focus on different musical genres and approaches and were a formative process in the development of his style, particularly as each of his solo albums seems more calculated, carefully composed and produced than their Mothers Of Invention counterparts.

### **Flo & Eddie**

Zappa's next album *Chunga's Revenge*<sup>66</sup> has been described as 'transitional'.<sup>67</sup> This is because it is an album in which Zappa explored a wide array of different musical styles, acting as a multi-genre artist, many of which hark back to earlier work. The album sounds like a platform for experimentation for Zappa and, furthermore, acts as a preview of much of Zappa's work to come. It has an eclectic array of tracks, the A-side ranging from *Hot Rats* jazz-fusion outtake 'Twenty Small Cigars',<sup>68</sup> guitar jam 'Transylvania Boogie',<sup>69</sup> and blues workout 'Road Ladies',<sup>70</sup> to a multi-part live avant-garde improvisation 'The Nancy & Mary Music'.<sup>71</sup>

The B-side introduces ex-Turtles singers, Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, performing under the pseudonym 'The Florescent Leech & Eddie' (later shortened to simply Flo & Eddie) due to contractual restrictions by The Turtles' record company. They perform on just four songs, all of a pop music nature and quite different from the rest of the album, all dealing with the subject of sex and/or groupie encounters. This is significant as it is the first time Zappa wrote such overtly 'pop' styled lyrics. These tracks preview the type of material that would be released on the next few albums, that is melodic vocal-led music where the lyrics are an important element of the song.

Zappa had moved away from the previous album's formalism by recruiting pop singers and playing his interpretation of pop music. This new band became simply The Mothers (rather

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<sup>66</sup> Frank Zappa, *Chunga's Revenge*, 10511 (1970).

<sup>67</sup> Chevalier, Dominique, *Viva! Zappa*, (1985). 65.

<sup>68</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Twenty Small Cigars', *Chunga's Revenge*, 10511 (1970).

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 'Transylvania Boogie'.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 'Road Ladies'.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Nancy & Mary Music'.

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than The Mothers Of Invention), with Flo & Eddie taking over vocal duties. Their vocal abilities, particularly when compared to Zappa's limited range, and their harmonizing with each other, provided something that had not appeared on any of Zappa's previous output, namely the potential to create three or four part harmony vocals between Flo, Eddie, and the rest of the band. The B-side of *Chunga's Revenge* also contains 'The Clap'.<sup>72</sup> Performed by using multiple overdubs by Zappa himself, this short percussion piece is a heavily influenced by the percussive styles of Varèse and Steve Reich. By presenting it amongst tracks of a firmly popular music nature, it highlights Zappa's desire to be seen as an artist who combined many diverse influences and was not concerned with any hostility one musical world may have for another, let alone the potential stigma of combining the two. Watson aptly summed up the diversity of *Chunga's Revenge*, 'Zappa was happy to be known as the King Of Weird: it gave him carte blanche to employ any musical texture or style that took his fancy.'<sup>73</sup> Each track was a small vignette to a Zappa, past and future.

The change in band name allowed Zappa to present solo composed work within a band context, and for the introduction of new musicians to supplement or even replace those in the standard Mothers lineup. This introduction of not only new talents but new personalities and new voices to the live show was 'a crime "original Mothers" fans' never forgave.'<sup>74</sup> Zappa used Flo & Eddie to mock pop-star behavior, using vaudeville pastiche on both *Chunga's Revenge* and the live album *Filmore East - June 1971*. Flo & Eddie brought wider commercial success to Zappa's material. Howard Kaylan (Flo) was aware of their contribution.

Frank tried for a long time with just his music, but now, through his music plus the acting and dialogue, he's creating this environment and, as a result, he's reaching a larger audience. He felt it was silly to have just a small band of committed active followers when, by changing his approach just a bit, he could attract a larger audience. Then, when they're not looking, he can give them what he wanted to play in the first place. As well as keeping most of the hardcore Mothers' audience that he already had, Frank has now got a larger, younger following; when Mark and I joined the group we were playing 2,000 seater halls, but now we're selling out places with a capacity of 10,000.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Clap'.

<sup>73</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Complete Guide to his Music*, (London, 2005), 23.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>75</sup> Kaylan, Howard, interviewed in *Zig Zag*, No, 25, (July 1972), 15.

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This notion of subverting the popular music idiom from within, would later return on *Over-Nite Sensation*.<sup>76</sup> Zappa adapted his approach to the records in order to build and broaden his audience, but even more so to the The Mothers' live show. The Flo & Eddie Mothers contained less of the free improvisation of the early Mothers Of Invention, a trait that alienated some of the more hardcore fans, switching to more compact renditions of tracks, spontaneity being limited within the live set to Zappa's improvised and much shortened guitar solos. The lyrics changed, sociopolitical commentaries replaced with the standardized popular music topic of sex, albeit with Zappa it is a subject portrayed in a crude, often visceral manner, designed to shock, and to attract a younger generation. This is illustrated for example in the live album *Filmore East - June 1971*,<sup>77</sup> which provides an explicit portrayal of the sexual activities behind the scenes of a rock'n'roll band. The tale of 'The Mud Shark'<sup>78</sup> is a particularly crude example, portraying an incident that would, in Zappa's own words, enter into rock mythology.<sup>79</sup> This change in approach helped Zappa to be increasingly financially secure.

As the heady days of rock counter-culture receded into the past it became obvious that rock was again a temporary cultural phase associated with adolescence. It was Zappa's ability to relate to that audience through the 70s and 80s that ensured that, whatever the difficulties he encountered in terms of corporate promotion and distribution, his music still kept a connection to the marketplace: precisely the situation required for his ambivalent, contradictory art to flourish.<sup>80</sup>

These albums represent Zappa the artist, fully embracing the norms of popular music. Whether this was in order to subvert popular music, or because he realised the financial potential of such a venture, is unclear, most likely both factors are relevant. However, it is clear that by making money from pop he was able to fund his more experimental projects such as the big band influenced album *The Grand Wazoo*<sup>81</sup> and his projects with the

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<sup>76</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>77</sup> The Mothers, *Filmore East - June 1971*, Rykodisc 10512 (1971).

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* 'The Mud Shark'.

<sup>79</sup> An alleged event was alleged to have occurred at the Edgewater Inn in Seattle on 28 July, 1969, involving Richard Cole, a road manager for Led Zeppelin and members of the band Vanilla Fudge. This event is alleged to involved a sexual act involving a young groupie and a fish, often claimed to be a mudshark. Davis, Steven, *Hammer of the Gods: The Led Zeppelin Saga*, (New York, 1985).

<sup>80</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 180-181.

<sup>81</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, *The Grand Wazoo*, Rykodisc 10517 (1972).

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London Symphony Orchestra. This project is talked about at length in *The Real Frank Zappa Book*. Zappa readily changed his musical approach depending on his situation. He worked across many genres and mediums, writing the music that he needed to write as opposed to what he wanted to write given unlimited resources.

### **Confined to a Wheelchair**

Despite increasing commercial success with the Flo & Eddie based band, Zappa suffered an unfortunate set of circumstances that interrupted his career. Without these interruptions Zappa may have continued to work with this band, producing more material in the same vein. The first of these circumstances was the loss of band's equipment at The Montreux Jazz Festival where the venue was burnt to the ground, as immortalized in the lyrics to Deep Purple's 'Smoke on the Water'.<sup>82</sup> Following this misfortune, Zappa and the band attempted to complete the tour using borrowed equipment. However, the end of The Mothers came in 1971 at the Rainbow Theatre in London, before completing the tour, when audience member Trevor Charles leapt across the orchestra pit as Zappa returned to the stage for the second encore, pushing him from the stage down into the orchestra pit, 15-feet below. Mark Volman recounts,

I remember looking down at him from the top of the pit and his leg was bent underneath him like a Barbie doll; his eyes were open but there was no life in them. Two or three of us were cradling him in the pit and the blood was running from his head to his knees We weren't sure if he would live through the night.<sup>83</sup>

Zappa sustained a fractured ankle, at least one broken rib, a temporarily paralyzed arm, a number of gashes and contusions to his head, and a crushed larynx, the result of his head being forced over his shoulder in the fall. This resulted in the pitch of his voice being a third lower than before the accident. This directly influenced his singing style, which became more often a monologue or speak-sung style, for the rest of his career. 'Having a low voice is nice but I would have preferred another means of acquiring it.'<sup>84</sup> This injury directly influenced the albums produced during the DiscReet Records period discussed later, in which Zappa was restricted to providing humorous speech over the music, recruiting other musicians to do the majority of the actual singing.

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<sup>82</sup> Deep Purple, 'Smoke on the Water', *Machine Head*, (1972).

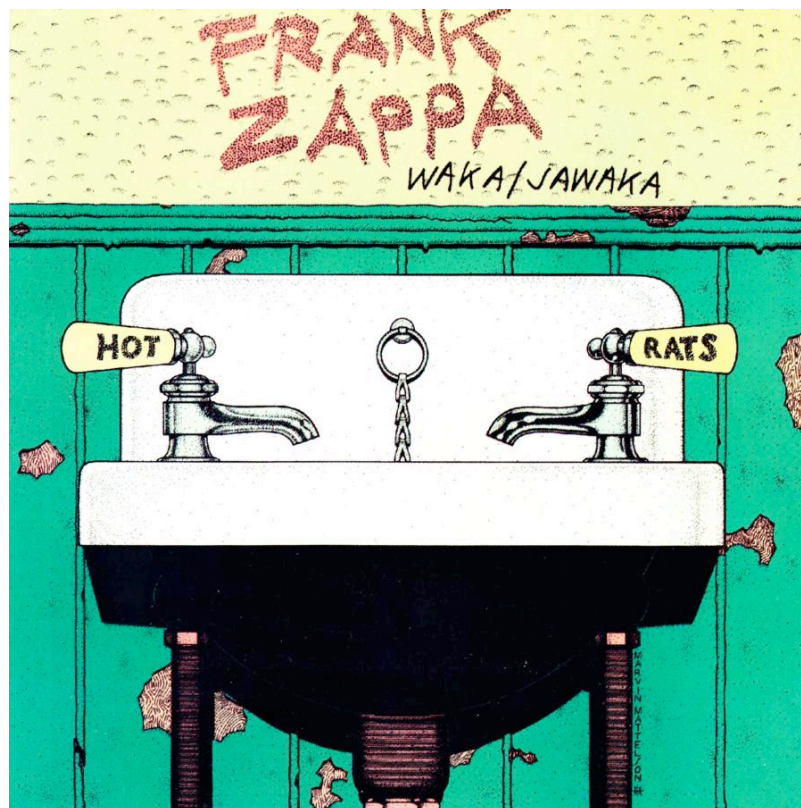
<sup>83</sup> Various, Volman, Mark, interviewed in, *Musician*, "Frank Zappa 1940-1993", (February, 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 115.

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Due to the extent of his injuries and complications with his broken leg, Zappa was confined to a wheelchair for the better part of a year in 1971. This enforced live hiatus in which he refused interviews and photos, allowed for a return to a less commercial approach to composition, allowing him to focus again on the jazz-fusion direction he began on *Hot Rats*.

Whilst wheelchair bound, touring was not an option, leading to the dissolution of the band. It 'didn't exist anymore - they all had to go out and get other jobs during the year I couldn't work.'<sup>85</sup> Confined to studio work and focusing on his skill as a composer and arranger, Zappa turned toward further jazz-rock efforts, albeit with larger ensembles than an average jazz-rock group. *Waka/Jawaka*<sup>86</sup> and *The Grand Wazoo*<sup>87</sup> albums display how Zappa's writing and recording technique had matured substantially in very little time. These albums share similarities with *Hot Rats*. *Waka/Jawaka* could be referred to as Hot Rats II, the cover artwork (shown below) displaying the words 'Hot' and 'Rats' in place of 'Hot' and 'Cold'.



<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 116

<sup>86</sup> Frank Zappa, *Waka/Jawaka*, Rykodisc 10516 (1972).

<sup>87</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, *The Grand Wazoo*, Rykodisc 10517 (1972).

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Zappa hired larger ensembles of musicians who possessed formal musical training. While wheelchair bound, he was unable to play guitar, and his accustomed extended blues-influenced guitar solos. This gave Zappa the opportunity to broaden his compositional approach, and paved the way for a diverse array of influences to surface, by composing and arranging for a large jazz-rock group with greater technical capability.

There was, however, a financial issue with touring with such large groups. *The Grand Wazoo* consisted of 20 members, all on Zappa's payroll, and a large number of supporting technicians.

My problem is economics. A lot of people think I'm a millionaire, and I'd just like to say I'm not, nor is there any chance in the near future of me becoming a millionaire. The reason is that the largest percentage of my money has gone back into equipment. Then you have to hire the technical people to move it, plug it in, and repair it. For every person on-stage, there's another person off-stage helping to make it happen.<sup>88</sup>

Following *The Grand Wazoo* tour, Zappa also commented,

It was a worthwhile experience. It cost me \$2,000. That's how much I lost on the tour. The tour grossed \$97,000, and the expenses exceed that by \$2,000. A group that size, carrying that much equipment, going to Europe, playing that few jobs in that amount of time cannot make any money at all.<sup>89</sup>

This period shows Zappa working as a composer, which is particularly evident in his methods, he was forced to compose everything on paper as he was unable to play instruments or actively work in the studio. These manuscripts had to be arranged, sent to copyists and distributed to musicians possessing formal training. Zappa was able to conduct from his wheelchair, however, the tour was a commercial failure and forced Zappa to assess the practicality of the band arrangements and to consider ways of achieving comparable results from a more compact unit. This led to another stylistic change, this time for purely financial reasons, reverting to a smaller ensemble. He restored sociocultural references and satire to the lyrics, and combined it with a polished production style. He formed a new label, DiscReet Records for this new direction.

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<sup>88</sup> Smith, Jim, 'Kicks in the Ear', *NME*, (January 26, 1974).

<sup>89</sup> Murray, Charles Shaar, 'Penguins in Bondage and Other Perversions', *NME*, (September 1, 1973).

### **DiscReet Records**

The release of the album *Over-Nite Sensation*<sup>90</sup> marked a move away from the original Mothers Of Invention, the Flo & Eddie Mothers, and his art-rock releases under the Verve and Bizarre labels. The first releases under Zappa's new company, DiscReet Records, ushered in a new era of commercial success but again alienated some of his art-rock supporters. '*Over-Nite Sensation*, in all its neon brashness, was an atrocity committed on a counterculture now revealed as hypocritical and collusive.'<sup>91</sup> This view of the counterculture was highlighted by Zappa himself. The fraudulence of the counterculture was a recurring lyrical theme, of which 'Cosmic Debris'<sup>92</sup> and 'Camarillo Brillo',<sup>93</sup> are particularly pithy examples.

The releases under DiscReet marked a conscious move towards a form that was as close to a traditional pop/rock album as Zappa would ever come. This new era of comparative commerciality was echoed in the DiscReet logo, 'combining businesslike simplicity with a sinister, retro 50's "streamlined" look.'<sup>94</sup> It brought Zappa a large number of new fans, continuing what he had begun with the Flo & Eddie albums. The music is more accessible, with compact arrangements and less extended improvisation. David Fricke, of Rolling Stone argues that *Over-Nite Sensation* was 'the turning point. He connected with an audience that stayed with him for the rest of his career.'<sup>95</sup>

*Over-Nite Sensation* combines the lyrical themes of sex, explored with the Flo & Eddie band, and combines it with the sociopolitical commentary of the early Mothers, satirising current issues and telling humorous stories. Zappa continued this approach on the follow-up album *Apostrophe (')*.<sup>96</sup> Both albums were recorded around the same time and

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<sup>90</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>91</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 210.

<sup>92</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Cosmik Debris', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>93</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>94</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 209.

<sup>95</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>96</sup> Frank Zappa, *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

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demonstrate his ability to explore and expand on the methods used in early bands, but do so with a group of more technically able musicians, in an accessible package.

Zappa's countercultural credentials are seriously called into question by records rife with melody, relatively short songs, with lyrics that wander from silly to, in the case of 'Don't Eat The Yellow Snow,'<sup>97</sup> novelty.<sup>98</sup>

The two albums mentioned appalled many of the critics. However, the 'silliness' of the albums had mass appeal, *Apostrophe (')* was to be Zappa's biggest commercial success in the USA.<sup>99</sup> This change of approach was a calculated one on Zappa's part. The dumbed down nature of his lyrics acts as a deflection from the complexity of the music. Kerry McNabb, a recording engineer for Zappa from the early 1970s has said that, '*Over-Nite Sensation* was musically very appealing to me, I mean it was like, Frank was a little jazz orientated but it was also rock'n'roll and it blended that really nice. I always liked that.'<sup>100</sup>

It should be noted that although one might describe some of Zappa's work as commercial and/or accessible, of the 20 singles he released, only one reached the top 20 singles in the USA, and only one made the top 40 in the UK. Of the around 100 Zappa albums released *Apostrophe* was the only one to make the USA album charts top 20, reaching number ten in the chart.

## 'Camarillo Brillo'

Zappa appeared to be working subversively from within the popular music industry. 'Camarillo Brillo'<sup>101</sup> both musically and thematically is an example of this, standing firmly in the pop song idiom, yet using this as a base to lampoon the counterculture. It embodies the stylistic shift toward more accessible music and lyrics, a style Zappa developed over

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<sup>97</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Don't Eat the Yellow Snow', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>98</sup> Lowe, Kelly Fisher, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, (Nebraska, 2007), 105.

<sup>99</sup> *Apostrophe (')* reached number 10 in the US Pop Albums Billboard chart.

<sup>100</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>101</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).



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the next few albums, gradually combining a level of comparative accessibility with increasing musical dexterity, culminating in 'Inca Roads'.<sup>102</sup>

Musically 'Camarillo Brillo' consists of simple major chords throughout. The musicians play together rather than against each other, as in much of Zappa's intentionally rhythmically confusing work, and unusually the track also stays in 4/4 throughout. Zappa's guitar provides brief, tasteful licks throughout, reminiscent of Mark Knopfler's guitar stylings on 'Sultans of Swing'.<sup>103</sup> Zappa predates Knopfler by five years, however, the comparison serves to highlight the use of short tasteful licks instead of sprawling exploratory solos. The track is catchy and memorable and it sets the tone that follows on the remainder of *Over-Nite Sensation*.

Lyricaly the track is a tuneful assault on the mysticism of the hippie counterculture, highlighting how transparent alternative culture had become by 1973.

And so she wandered through the doorway  
Just like a shadow from the tomb.<sup>104</sup>

The song tells the story of the narrator's encounter with a 'hippie-mama',<sup>105</sup> personifying the hippie scene. The character thinks highly of herself as 'the magic mama' before continuing to name-check the hippie paraphernalia on display around her apartment.

She could throw a mean Tarot  
She had a snake for a pet  
And an amulet

Right past her fuming incense stench  
To where she hung her castanets.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

<sup>103</sup> Dire Straits, 'Sultans of Swing,' *Dire Straits*, Vertigo (1978).

<sup>104</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>105</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 220.

<sup>106</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

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The title 'Camarillo Brillo' refers 'to a kind of white Afro, the kind of hair style that a middle class woman who was "down with the struggle" might have worn.'<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the song refers to her belief that,

She ruled the toads  
Of the short forest  
And every newt in Idaho  
And every cricket who had chorused  
By the bush in Buffalo.<sup>108</sup>

The woman evidently wishes to demonstrate her 'oneness with nature,' a central part of the stereotypical hippie ethos. Furthermore, the impression is given that the woman is somewhat removed from reality, implying the influence of hallucinogenic drugs, and references literature associated with the hippie counterculture.

Breeding a Dwarf  
But wasn't done yet  
She had grey-green skin  
A doll with a pin<sup>109</sup>

Zappa is naming artifacts of this literature which includes; Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>110</sup>, in which Dwarves and forests are heavily featured; Occultist Aleister Crowley, with a gesture to voodoo magic; and the pseudoscientific writings of Erich von Däniken, particularly *Chariots of the Gods*,<sup>111</sup> the latter being the subject of 'Inca Roads.'

While at the same time appealing to this countercultural market, Zappa is highlighting the fraudulence of the hippie counterculture that was steadily being absorbed into consumer-led society during the 1970s as 'individual social identity became more closely identified with the consumption (and display) of goods.'<sup>112</sup> The hippie identity had become a popular modern commodity and fashion statement.

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<sup>107</sup> Lowe, Kelly Fisher, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, (Nebraska, 2007), 110.

<sup>108</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Tolkein, J. R. R., *The Lord of the Rings*, (London, 1955).

<sup>111</sup> Däniken, Erich von, *Chariots of the Gods*, (London, 1969).

<sup>112</sup> Shuker, Roy, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, (New York, 2005), 46.

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Despite Zappa's straightforward vocal tone throughout, it is the music, in its bouncing joviality, that reveals the irony with which he speaks. 'Its commercial vacuity acknowledges the alienation of the rock market. Adorno remarked: "Novelty songs have always existed on a contempt for meaning which, as predecessors and successors of psychoanalysis, they reduce to a monotony of sexual symbolism."<sup>113</sup><sup>114</sup> The song, and much of Zappa's output, could be labeled 'novelty' as Adorno suggests, however, the sense of 'novelty' is a calculated aspect of the track's aesthetic, 'novelty' equating here with satire.

### Conceptual Continuity and the Poodle

Zappa tried to create continuity through his entire body of work by drawing threads between isolated songs, using abstract themes such as 'the poodle' to connect them. He was trying to emulate 'classical' composers, to be viewed based on his body of work, rather than by a single album or track. The commodification of the counterculture in 'Camarillo Brillo' is a theme reprised in 'Cosmic Debris',<sup>115</sup> and previously alluded to in the Flo & Eddie version of 'Call Any Vegetable'<sup>116</sup> with a memorable mid-song routine satirising countercultural consumerism.

**FZ:** You know, a lot of people don't bother about their friends in the vegetable kingdom. They, they think: What can I say? Some times they think: Where can I go?

**HK:** Where can I go to get my poodle clipped in Burbank?

**MV:** *At Ralph's vegetarian poodle clippin', where you can come this ...*

**HK:** Where can I go to get organic Vaseline for my intercourse?

**MV:** *At Bob and Ray's Swahili restaurant, where you can come this Friday...*

**HK:** Where can I go to get my jeans embroidered in Fullerton?

**MV:** *At Jeans, at Jeans North where nothing fits*

**HK:** Where can I go to get my zipper repaired in Hollywood?

**MV:** *Who gives a fuck anyway!*

**HK:** Where can I go to get my speakers fixed?

**MV:** *Hey ... at Jack La...*

**HK:** Where can I go to get my exit lights?

**MV:** *At Jack La Lanne Hamburgers on 312 Whittier Boulevard*

**HK:** Where can I go to get my stomach pumped? Where can I go to collapse?

**MV:** *Adee do...*

**FZ:** Questions, Questions, Questions, flooding into the mind of the concerned young person today.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Adorno, Theodor, and Horkheimer, Max, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (1944), 138.

<sup>114</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 221.

<sup>115</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Cosmik Debris', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>116</sup> The Mothers, 'Call Any Vegetable,' *Just Another Band from L.A.*, Rykodisc 10515 (1972).

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

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This routine is one of the earliest appearances of the poodle in Zappa's work. The poodle in this case is pointing to pets as a non-functional commodity, and the relevant paraphernalia associated with them. It is symbolic of the unnecessary consumerism firmly entwined in a modern sense of social identity.

Look, a poodle is born. It's got hair evenly distributed all over its small, piquant, canine-type body. Figure it out. They don't start looking weird until some woman decides that she wants to shape all that stuff to make it look like a walking shrubbery.<sup>118</sup>

Poodles also form a part of what Zappa termed 'Conceptual Continuity'.

There is a concept to what I'm doing and there is a continuity to the concept, and I happen to be living inside of the concept. I'm a participant in it. The conceptual continuity is this: everything, even this interview, is part of what I do for, let's call it, my entertainment work. And there's a big difference between sitting here and talking about this kind of stuff, and writing a song like 'Titties and Beer'. But as far as I'm concerned, it's all part of the same continuity. It's all one piece. It all relates in some weird way back to the focal point of what's going on.<sup>119</sup>

The reason for the use of the poodle, a recurrent theme across his body of work, is according to Zappa, to bring unity to the collection. He believed that whilst albums, performances and interviews can be treated individually, they should also be considered within the context of the larger body of work. Conceptual continuity, using different key concepts that thread together seemingly unrelated works, forms part of his larger theory of the 'Project/Object'.

Project/Object is a term I have used to describe the overall concept of my work in various mediums. Each project (in whatever realm), or interview connected to it, is part of a larger object, for which there is no 'technical name'.<sup>120</sup>

Zappa however, dismisses any deeper meaning to the use of the poodle other than for unification.

You may find a little *poodle* over here, a little *blow job* over there, etc., etc. I am not obsessed by *poodles* or *blow jobs*, however; these words (and others of equal insignificance), along with

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<sup>118</sup> Marshall, Bob, interviewed, Zappa, Frank, (October 21-22 1988).

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 139.

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pictorial images and melodic themes, recur throughout the albums, interviews, films, videos (and this book) for no other reason than to unify the 'collection'.<sup>121</sup>

Despite his dismissive tone, clearly there is greater significance to his use of these words. In the case of poodles, he uses them as a vehicle to convey his contempt for the consumerism of the counterculture. The conceptual continuity ideal furthermore, is a clear link to his desire to be viewed as a serious composer, regardless of genre or medium. His appreciation of classical music, of composers regarded and remembered based on a unified body of work, is clearly an influence on his approach, thus he incorporates and adapts classical musical concepts such as extended structural forms and leitmotif. Certainly these motifs draw a thread through Zappa's work in a way that is more common in the work of art music rather than popular music composers.

'Dirty Love'<sup>122</sup> explicitly introduces the poodle for the first time.

In 'Dirty Love' the narrator encounters a groupie whom he treats entirely as a sex object...For Zappa, that was all there was to sex: as long as everybody had an orgasm, everything was all right. 'Dirty Love' concludes with a young woman having sex with her poodle. It probably never occurred to Zappa that this description of bestiality might offend people.<sup>123</sup>

This track is not an endorsement of bestiality, rather Zappa exploiting the nature of social correctness for comedic effect, part of an ongoing project of social critique. Canine references, although not explicitly poodles, continue to appear through the next several albums.

The changing aesthetic of Zappa's music demonstrates his awareness of the commercial world. He was aware that in reaching a broader market, despite accusations of 'selling-out,' he was widening his influence and accentuating the potency of the 'Zappa' name as a brand. He is portrayed in the media as being particularly 'wacky', as is evident in the Zappa-approved promotional animated television commercial<sup>124</sup> for *Apostrophe (')*. The colorful promo gives little hint as to the depth of Zappa's work, purely focusing on short excerpts from tracks and sampling outlandish musical phrases and comic sounding vocals,

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<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

<sup>122</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Dirty Love', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>123</sup> Miles, Barry, *Zappa: A Biography*, (New York, 2004), 233.

<sup>124</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Album promo', *Apostrophe (')*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRbn3ZZx0Mg> (1974).

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for example 'great googly-moogly,'<sup>125</sup> whilst also adding cartoon sound effects. This promo highlights the comedic value of Zappa's music, not the serious side. Furthermore, Zappa appeared to be embracing this new-found accessibility and popularity. He used the financial gain from his more commercial music to fund other activities.

Thanks to songs like 'Dinah Moe Humm', 'Titties & Beer' and 'Don't Eat The Yellow Snow', I managed to accumulate enough cash to bribe a group of drones to grind its way through pieces like 'Mo 'n Herb's Vacation', 'Bob in Dacron' and 'Bogus Pomp' (eventually released on *London Symphony Orchestra, Volumes I and II*) - in performances which come off like high-class 'demos' of what actually resides in the scores.<sup>126</sup>

It is clear that Zappa was as frustrated with the lack of personal engagement and commitment of classical musicians, as with the commerciality of some of his popular music based work.

Despite obviously targeted musical appeal on Zappa's part, he is dismissive of the *Apostrophe's* success, attributing it to,

an accident because a guy in Pittsburgh took 'Don't Eat The Yellow Snow', cut it down...to three minutes and put it on the station. The guy who did it heard the song, perceived it as a modern-day novelty record and put it on right alongside 'Teeny Weeny Bikini' and it became a hit. But it was nothing that Warner Brothers ever foresaw, it was nothing that I could have foreseen as a guy at DiscReet Records, a subsidiary of a subsidiary of a subsidiary. Who knew? The credit goes to the DJ.<sup>127</sup>

Zappa was hesitant to appear commercial in interviews, and downplays any sense of musical elitism. By embracing the high technical standards of classical music and applying them to popular music, he is rejecting the 'stuffy' image of the classical composer and simultaneously demonstrating that popular music can be more advanced.

Zappa's definition of 'earning a living' is clearly a significant factor in his work. The DiscReet Records period was specifically targeted at financial gain, particularly by provoking the audience with his lyrics, because he knew it would be received well by his audience, resulting in all-important sales. 'The people most offended by my lyrics seem to

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<sup>125</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Nanook Rubs It,' *Apostrophe* ('), Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>126</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 146.

<sup>127</sup> Ruhlmann, William, 'Moving on to Phase Three,' *Goldmine*, January 27, (1989).

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be rock critics. The audiences usually like them.'<sup>128</sup> In an interview with Zappa for NME in 1973 he said, 'Our audiences are generally larger than they've ever been before.'<sup>129</sup>

Through this successful period, Zappa's popular music credentials came to the fore, with his classical leaning in the background, in a more subtle guise. Shorter songs meant that extended melodic experimentation and improvisation had to be kept to a minimum. However, dense small clusters of rhythmic and melodic complexity remained, for example in 'Montana'<sup>130</sup> which contains a vocal section, sung by Tina Turner and the Ikettes, which combines humorous lyrics about dental floss with angular melodic and rhythmic phrasing. This is an example of Zappa combining two musical worlds within the popular idiom, something he would develop further in 'Inca Roads' as will be discussed later.

### The Bands

Beyond economic reasons, a further significant influence on Zappa's compositions were the capabilities and backgrounds of the musicians he had in his employ. The band of the DiscReet Records period, ending with *One Size Fits All*,<sup>131</sup> was one of particular technical accomplishment, and from a variety of different backgrounds, and allowed Zappa to experiment widely as he had the means to reproduce his vision accurately and reliably. It is important to understand these influences from his different bands, the cross section of musicians he had in his employ manifests in his stylistic choices musically.

Zappa always wrote with consideration for the musicians he had available to him at the time. Songs would be rearranged for different bands to accommodate a certain lineup or individual specialist talent.

Old songs get modified to accommodate each new band. The body of the song, the melody line, the words, and the chords remain the same, but all aspects of 'clothing,' or the orchestration are up for grabs, based on the musical resources at hand.

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<sup>128</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 221.

<sup>129</sup> Murray, Charles Shaar, 'Godmother', *NME*, (August 26, 1973), 197.

<sup>130</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Montana', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>131</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

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With the 1988 band (twelve pieces including myself), the orchestration was far more luxuriant for some of the older songs than when they were originally recorded, simply because I didn't want to have eleven guys standing round onstage with nothing to do.<sup>132</sup>

Zappa assembled a new band for *Over-Nite Sensation* (1973), the core players<sup>133</sup> of which stayed together over the next several albums, *Apostrophe (')* (1974), *Roxy & Elsewhere* (1974),<sup>134</sup> and *One Size Fits All* (1975).<sup>135</sup> The core members of this group, led by Zappa on guitar, consisted of keyboardist George Duke (also adding his fluent vocal ability to many tracks), bassist Tom Fowler, and virtuoso percussionist Ruth Underwood, introducing a fundamentally 'classical' instrument, a marimba, to what otherwise is a conventional rock lineup. Napoleon Murphy Brock added vocals from *Apostrophe (')* onwards and Ralph Humphrey was the drummer until the live album *Roxy & Elsewhere* where he was joined by Chester Thompson, the two drummers playing simultaneously. Thompson later replaced him altogether for *One Size Fits All*.

This four album period of intense creativity had a variety of credits in terms of the band name itself. *Over-Nite Sensation* and *Roxy & Elsewhere* were credited as 'Frank Zappa & The Mothers', implying a sense of the group's involvement on the records, particularly in the case of *Roxy & Elsewhere* as it is, with the exception of the occasional overdub, a live album showcasing the virtuosity of the band. *Apostrophe (')* is credited simply to 'Frank Zappa', and *One Size Fits All* is credited as 'Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention', dropping the capital 'O' is 'a last nod at the group ethic,'<sup>136</sup> recalling 'of Invention' for the first time since *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*, the last album released by the original Mothers

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<sup>132</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 163.

<sup>133</sup> The *Over-Nite Sensation* band consisted of Ralph Humphrey, Sal Marquez, George Duke, Tom Fowler, Bruce Fowler, Ian Underwood, Ruth Underwood, and Jon-Luc Ponty, plus Tina Turner, Linda Sims & Debbie Wilson. *Apostrophe (')* featured the same musicians as *Over-Nite Sensation* plus Jim Gordon, John Guerin, Aynsley Dunbar, Jack Bruce, Sugar Cane Harris, Napoleon Murphy Brock and Tony Duran. *Roxy & Elsewhere* musicians were George Duke, Tom Fowler, Ruth Underwood, Jeff Simmons, Don Preston, Bruce Fowler, Walt Fowler, Napoleon Murphy Brock, and Chester Thompson. *One Size Fits All* features George Duke, Napoleon Murphy Brock, Chester Thompson, Tom Fowler, Ruth Underwood, James "Bird-Legs" Youmann, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, and Bloodshot Rollin' Red (Captain Beefheart).

<sup>134</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, *Roxy & Elsewhere*, Rykodisc 10520 (1974).

<sup>135</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

<sup>136</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 265.



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Of Invention. Following *One Size Fits All*, no other album of new material would be credited to The Mothers in any form, as he finally severed the link to his earlier work and the band that spawned his career.

Zappa wanted a composer's complete control over the music, rather than the collaborative approach of a band.

One of the things about Frank that I know drove a lot of people crazy was that he was very sure of what he wanted. That could be difficult if a musician wanted to do his own thing.<sup>137</sup>

The control over the musicians in his employ was among the reasons he cited for the dissolution of the original Mothers Of Invention lineup. Formed initially as a self-contained band unit, members became disillusioned with their lack of creative control and input. Despite the band being officially known as The Mothers Of Invention, in reality Zappa was in charge. Lowell George, who played with The Mothers Of Invention on *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*, described the situation.

The band at the time was very much like the Lawrence Roxy of Welk. Frank wrote all the charts. Everything was very prescribed. There was no room at all for any emotion. The band felt very hurt and ripped off because Frank was living in a \$100,000 house in Beverley Hills and they were all still down in the valley. Frank would write piece after piece after piece and they would have to play it exact. They were hurt by the fact that he was making more money, but more than that they became more alienated by the fact that he would overwork and become totally inhuman.<sup>138</sup>

Zappa was clearly working within a classical model, as composer he was writing the music and taking the lion's share of royalties, with paid musicians performing to his increasingly detailed and controlled specification.

Zappa was able to coax the best from his musicians, utilising their talents in often unexpected ways to both public and performer. Mark Volman from the Flo & Eddie band noted that, 'Frank demanded something of us that we had never really experienced in rock'n'roll, which was fitting ourselves into a band, not just as singers, but as musicians

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<sup>137</sup> Various, Ruth Underwood interviewed in, "Frank Zappa 1940-1993", *Musician*, (February, 1994).

<sup>138</sup> Erskine, Peter, 'This here's LOWELL GEORGE, (excited gibbering)', *NME*, (February 1, 1975).

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using our voices as musical instruments.'<sup>139</sup> With the introduction of the *Over-Nite Sensation* band

Frank had musicians around him who could realise both the humor and technical brilliance of his writing. In particular, Ruth Underwood's phenomenal skill with vibes, marimba and other percussion brought a pointilistic exactitude to the jagged terrain of Frank's melodies.<sup>140</sup>

In turn of Zappa, Ruth Underwood has said,

I was ready to dedicate myself completely to Frank's music. He really knew what buttons to push, emotionally and musically. He was a remarkable referee. He knew how to synthesize people's personalities and talents. That's a very rare gift. He wasn't just a conductor standing there waving his arms; he was playing us as people! I became a perfectionist, I suppose because I had to be.<sup>141</sup>

Interviewed in the documentary<sup>142</sup> Underwood showcases Zappa's ability by displaying a handwritten manuscript of a piece written for marimba and inserted into 'St. Alphonso's Pancake Breakfast'<sup>143</sup> as the interlude 'Rollo Interior'.<sup>144</sup> Underwood states,

Many of the parts Frank wrote for me, just suited me perfectly. It's the music that I would have written for myself if I'd had that talent, and Frank knew how to do that for me. I think he knew how to do that for really everybody.<sup>145</sup>

This short instrumental piece has similarities to instrumental sections in 'Inca Roads',<sup>146</sup> again written whilst Underwood was in the band. Such instrumental passages were a result of this talented musician's presence in the band, tailor-made to her instrumental capability and musical palette. Zappa's son Dweezil, in preparation for the Zappa Plays

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<sup>139</sup> Kloet, Co de, *Society Pages*, 10, 'Happy Together: Part Two'.

<sup>140</sup> Slaven, Neil, *Electric Don Quixote: The Definitive Story of Frank Zappa*, (London, 1996), 197.

<sup>141</sup> Ruth Underwood interviewed in *Musician*, "Frank Zappa 1940-1993", (February, 1994).

<sup>142</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>143</sup> Frank Zappa, 'St. Alphonso's Pancake Breakfast', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>144</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Rollo Interior', movement in, 'St. Alphonso's Pancake Breakfast', *Apostrophe (')*, Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

<sup>145</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>146</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

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Zappa<sup>147</sup> project, a band formed by Dweezil paying tribute to his father's music, comments on the piece,

I felt compelled to learn it [Rollo Interior] on guitar. Just because it's so much a part of Frank's compositional style, the rhythms, the melody of it, the way it all comes together with a sense of humor, but its graceful and its just difficult as all hell.<sup>148</sup>

Zappa earned tremendous respect and commitment from his musicians. They submitted themselves to his grueling rehearsal schedule with dedication. Barry Hansen for Rolling Stone describes a rehearsal attended at the period,

[It] was devoted to the meticulous honing of several especially angular and asymmetrical passages. The musicians worked diligently, oblivious to the light crews who scurried about in their midst, setting up strobe lights and such. Except for the flashing lights, the scarcity of music stands, the process resembled a symphony rehearsal far more than the usual loose rock session, with nary a beer bottle or joint to be seen. Zappa is a perfectionist, but what may be more remarkable is his prodigious energy level, which enables him to be a prolific writer/composer despite a heavy touring schedule.<sup>149</sup>

Keyboard player George Duke elaborates on this observation with an insight into studio commitments. They would 'enter the studio at noon or one o'clock, and be there until seven or eight o'clock in the morning.'<sup>150</sup> A potential twenty hour day demands a particular level of commitment, such devotion from his band members allowed Zappa to pursue increasingly complicated music with consummate reliability on stage.

God, the amount of music you had to play the same each night! That was some of the most difficult music I've ever played, partly because he composed a lot of it from the guitar. But once I was in the band for four years or whatever, it came to a point where he didn't have to write anything out for me. I knew what Frank was looking for. [...] Once we get to the level we were at on *The Roxy and Elsewhere*, there was almost nothing we couldn't do. [...] We were like a rubber-band band.<sup>151</sup>

Having the right musicians backing him meant Zappa could escape both the technical restrictions of most popular musicians and the slavery to the score of classical players, in

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<sup>147</sup> Pierre & Francois Lamoureux, dir., *Zappa Plays Zappa*, (2007). Additional information can be found at <http://www.zappaplayszappa.com>.

<sup>148</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>149</sup> Hansen, Barry, *Rolling Stone*, 'Zappa: Continuity Is The Mothers' Mother', (July 4, 1974).

<sup>150</sup> Doerstuck, Robert L., *Keyboard*, 'The Zappa Legacy', (April 1994).

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

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order to realise his ambitious musical design, Zappa and the band developing an intuitive musical empathy. His ability to manage his musicians personalities and unique technical talents, writing parts that would fully utilise their abilities and experience, allowed for a period of prodigious creativity, releasing four albums in three years and touring relentlessly, culminating in *One Size Fits All*.

I'm not a composer but I felt like one when I played Frank's music. That's how intimate a relationship he had with his players. I have never met a player who worked with Frank for any length of time who has ever gotten over *not* playing for him. It's not just, "Oh yeah, it was a good gig." It was an experience unlike any other.<sup>152</sup>

This band was comprised largely of musicians of a jazz or conservatory background and the music was more technically precise and in a broadly progressive rock/jazz form, a significant departure from the art-rock craziness of the first ten years with The Mothers. The musicians, in a period of comparative stability compared to the often revolving lineup of musicians in the earlier years, developed an intuitive connection with Zappa's compositional style. They were able to realise his technically demanding written parts, and were able to extrapolate their own parts from Zappa's musical instruction.

His favorite way to compose was in the moment with a guitar. So, you know, you set up, you have a really well rehearsed band and the band is happening and everybody does what they're supposed to do. Then you have this moment, which belongs to you and you go for what they used to joke about. I remember a conversation with Frank and Beefheart where they were talking about the 'perfect note,' and the 'perfect note' is really the only one that is *possible* to play that is absolutely correct.<sup>153</sup>

This collaborative form of composition caused contention with some musicians over credits. Eric Clapton, after seeing The Mothers at the Garrick Theatre, was invited back to Zappa's house where

he made me play in a Revox and told me to play all the licks I knew. He was very manipulative and knew how to appeal to my ego and my vanity. I think he just had files and files of tapes of people.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Various, Ruth Underwood interviewed in *Musician*, "Frank Zappa 1940-1993", (February, 1994).

<sup>153</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>154</sup> Mead, David, *Guitarist*, 'The *Guitarist* Interview', June 1994.

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Such methods could often leave band members feeling exploited, as Lowell George states,

Frank borrowed a lot of music from a lot of players that are in the group. Don Preston has been ripped off all along. A lot of chord passages are Donny's concepts that Frank borrowed. Frank's attitude is, "The guy plays in my band. I pay him \$250 a week, sure I can borrow anything from him"<sup>155</sup>

However with his breakaway from The Mothers, retaining complete control over a hired unit of musicians on a strict salary, the issue of intellectual theft or borrowing dissipated. Former Mothers members' grievances, striking out at Zappa, often appear bitter at the loss of a steady income because of the demise of the band.

The highly skilled unit captured on *One Size Fits All* represents a band at the height of its powers. Enjoying a period of stability, Zappa was able to sculpt the band to his design, individual musicians progressing whilst under his tutelage.

I don't give musicians a 'questionnaire' when they join the band about where they've been to school or what kind of technical information they possess - I'll hear the audition whether they can play or not. For the ones who pass the audition, as soon as I find out what they **don't** know, I attempt to devise musical 'language' that will describe my musical intentions, in shorthand form, if they don't know the standard technical terms or if (in spite of the fact that they might be great players) they have never been asked to try some of the things the band veterans have been doing for years from muscle memory.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, an intense touring schedule coupled with Zappa's prolific writing whilst on and off the road, meant that new material had to be developed rapidly in rehearsals and sound checks, refined on the road before being committed to tape in the studio.

He just devoured music; that was all he thought about. We listened to his music on the bus; we rehearsed it at sound checks; we played it that night; we analyzed it the next day.<sup>157</sup>

'Inca Roads'<sup>158</sup> represents one such track. Refined on the road, the recording is a hybrid of studio and live recording, the basic tracks were recorded for a live KCET television

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<sup>155</sup> Walley, David, *No Commercial Potential: The Sage of Frank Zappa & The Mothers Of Invention*, New York , 1996).

<sup>156</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 166.

<sup>157</sup> Various, Ruth Underwood interviewed in *Musician*, "Frank Zappa 1940-1993", (February, 1994).

<sup>158</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

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program with overdubs added in the studio later, whilst the guitar solo was taken from a live performance of the track, edited down to become more coherent and spliced into the rest of the track. To execute a track of such difficulty without the need for extensive overdubs and editing, as we are used to with today's digital recording technology, clearly represents a band of particular prowess, a seamless unit that has become greater than the sum of its parts.

With *Over-Nite Sensation* & *Apostrophe (')* in the can, Zappa entered into what biographers would probably call, were it the seventeenth century, his mature period. His music seems, from this point on much less desperate and much more focused. The albums would show an increasing ability and maturity. It would take real disruption to move him back to pure humor.<sup>159</sup>

### Inca Roads

All I'm interested in doing is writing music that I want to hear. If I'm going into an area that you're not interested in going, fine, you stay home. I'll tell you what happened when I get back. I'll do you a public service, I'll go find out what's out there. The only problem is, if you don't go there with me, you're gonna have to take my word for it when I give you my report. Now that's not too smart. You should at least come along for the ride and find out what's happening out there.<sup>160</sup>

Much of Frank Zappa's music can be broadly divided into two types, serious and complex music, demonstrating his contemporary classical music influences, and humourous, accessible music designed to entertain (and generate funds), through catchy melodies, profane or political lyrics, all of which were targeted to appeal to the counterculture whilst subtly mocking it from within. Zappa blurred the boundary between two musical worlds, the 'serious' and the 'popular' and was not fully accepted in either one, but he was able to morph between and combine the two. 'Inca Roads'<sup>161</sup> from *One Size Fits All* displays influence from both musical worlds.

### Meaning in the Title 'Inca Roads'

'Inca Roads' continued Zappa's trend for lampooning aspects of the countercultural ethos without specifically discounting them, dwelling on specifics and minutiae to illustrate his

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<sup>159</sup> Lowe, Kelly Fisher, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, (Nebraska, 2007), 113.

<sup>160</sup> Martin Perlich, radio interview on bootleg album, *Leatherette*. Loonar Tunes, 2S-5LP (1977).

<sup>161</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Inca Roads', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

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point, similar to the techniques used in 'Camarillo Brillo',<sup>162</sup> as discussed earlier. In this track Zappa abandoned his former goofiness for a more incisive, serious approach, the satire much less blatant. The primary semantic focus of the track was the writings of Swiss author, Erich von Däniken, specifically his book *Chariot's of the Gods?*<sup>163</sup>, through which he popularised his theories of paleocontact and his ancient astronaut hypothesis. Released in 1968, Däniken's pseudoscientific theories proved popular within the counterculture. He presented evidence (later revealed as false by the scientific community) that pre-Columbian Mesoamerican artifacts, such as the Nazca Lines in Peru, constructed by ancestors of the Incas, were landing strips for extra-terrestrial vehicles.

If you fly over this territory, the plain of Nazca, you can make out gigantic lines, laid out geometrically, some of which run parallel to each other, while others intersect or are surrounded by large trapezoidal areas. The archaeologists say that they are Inca roads. A preposterous idea! Of what use to the Incas were roads that ran parallel to each other? That intersected? That were laid out in a plain and came to a sudden end? [...] Seen from the air, the clear-cut impression that the 37-mile-long plain of Nazca made on me was that of an airfield! What is so farfetched about the idea?<sup>164</sup>

Däniken invites belief by targeting the countercultural ideals of individuality, suggesting that by investing in his work and his beliefs the reader is setting themselves apart from the norm, the established conformity of the state and established history. The opening paragraph of the book states,

It took courage to write this book, and it will take courage to read it. Because its theories and proofs do not fit into the mosaic of traditional archaeology, constructed so laboriously and firmly cemented down, scholars will call it nonsense and put it on the index of those books which are better left unmentioned. Laymen will withdraw into the snail shell of their familiar world when faced with the probability that finding out about our past will be even more mysterious and adventurous than finding out about the future.<sup>165</sup>

Zappa was a fan of science fiction at an early age, and he satirises Däniken's ideas by mixing them with the imagery of the traditional 'flying-saucer'. In 'Inca Roads' (see score letter C) lead singer and keyboard player George Duke exclaims,

Sure was different, I ain't seen nothing like it in my entire life.

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<sup>162</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Camarillo Brillo', *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>163</sup> Däniken, Erich von, *Chariots of the Gods*, (London, 1969).

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

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This spoken line leaps out abruptly, breaking away from the free-flowing melody preceding it, and becomes immersed in intentionally confusing vocal chatter. It expresses science fiction mythology, evoking the reaction of a UFO spotter being interviewed.

The science-fiction parody is reinforced by the opening 16 bars, until the vocal enters, which contain synthesized space ship sounds. The electronic noises, created from white noise manipulated through the filter controls on a synthesizer, evoke a science fiction film. The sound effects are coupled with an ethereal synthesizer melody, sounding much like a theremin, an instrument widely used in science-fiction films such as 'The War of the Worlds,'<sup>166</sup> 'Forbidden Planet,'<sup>167</sup> and '2001: A Space Odyssey.'<sup>168</sup> The synthesizer purposefully plays out of key, evoking an otherworldly feel. The notes glide smoothly from one to another before gradually descending chromatically to the entry of the lead vocal, suggesting a space ship slowly descending to land. This introduces the narrative theme of the track and sets up Zappa's science-fiction parody before a single word is spoken, purely through clever sound design. The sound effects, through synchresis,<sup>169</sup><sup>170</sup> combine filtered white noise swooshes as the wind of the Andes, providing the locational soundscape, whilst the ethereal, theremin-like melody depicts the spaceship coming into land.

Whilst the title 'Inca Roads' seems simple, it refers both to the incredibly sophisticated road system the Incas possessed, and is also a direct reference to Däniken, who rejects the archaeological suggestion that the Nazca Lines were roads. Referring back to the earlier quotation, 'The archaeologists say that they are Inca roads. A preposterous idea!'<sup>171</sup> This represents a lack of informed research on Däniken's part, as in fact the purpose of the lines is unknown, and there are many archaeological suggestions of their purpose, one such suggestion being that they were symbols aimed towards the Gods.

They [the Nazca lines] are approximately fifteen hundred years old and might be calendary observations, or they could be genealogical symbol 'trees.' [...] It is known that sometime close

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<sup>166</sup> Haskin, Byron, dir., *The War of The Worlds*, (1953).

<sup>167</sup> Wilcox, Fred M., *The Forbidden Planet*, (1956).

<sup>168</sup> Kubrick, Stanley, dir., *2001: A Space Odyssey*, (1968).

<sup>169</sup> The forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears at the same time (from *synchronism* and *synthesis*).

<sup>170</sup> Chion, Michel, *Audio-Vision: Sound On Screen*, (New York, 1990). 63-64.

<sup>171</sup> Däniken, Erich von, *Chariots of the Gods*, (London, 1969), 15-16.



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to A.D. 900 a mountain people called the *Tiahuanaco Empire* came to the coast in a religio-military invasion. They had an interest in astrology, a solar calendar, and, as well, a sort of shadow clock. It is highly possible that the Tiahuanacan culture brought the technique of the 'lines' to Nazca.<sup>172</sup>

Däniken's approach therefore is based on assumption and invented evidence, clearly a suitable target for Zappa, who consistently refuted the pseudoscientific leanings of the counterculture. By calling the song 'Inca Roads', a term invented by Däniken to describe a supposed consensus within archaeology, that does not actually exist, Zappa parodies Däniken's theories and hippie culture, whilst drawing on them as subject material.

Another interpretation of the title is that it is the pun, 'Ink Erodes'. This could refer to impermanence, to the fading of metanarratives, the fading of texts, to early records not surviving. The pun in the title represents a disguised attack from Zappa. The hidden meaning in the title mirrors the hidden or lost purposes behind many surviving artifacts from ancient civilizations. In the context of the Incas, the closest thing to 'writing' that they possessed was the 'quipu,' a system of knotted strings. Whilst only capable of storing statistics it would serve as an aid to the shared memory recounted between generations. However, only certain trained individuals were able to interpret these 'quipus,' thus history was documented from a certain point of view, that of the ruling class.

The wholesale destruction of the 'archives' of the *quipus* by the crusading padres in the seventeenth century (in their zeal to stamp out idolry, believing naively that the *quipus* 'were books of the devil') and the gradual dying out of the 'rememberers,' the interpreters of the *quipus*, were the twin disasters of Andean history. With the destruction of one and the passing of the other there was lost that history of the whole Andean area which now can be bridged only by archaeology. The *quipus* found in graves tell nothing; they are only lifeless strings.<sup>173</sup>

'Ink erodes' also attacks the written word, the literary form Däniken participates in, comparing the permanence of the Nazca Lines with the short-lived writings of the author.

### **Lyrical Form**

'Inca Roads' does not conform to the conventional verse/chorus structure of popular song and furthermore the lyrics do not have regular rhythmic structure and rhyme. Zappa takes the setting of a particular genre, having learned the required rules and norms, then

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<sup>172</sup> Hagen, W. von, *The Ancient Sun Kingdoms of the Americas*, (Cologne, 1962), 234.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, 317.

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purposefully deviates from them. Zappa was always seeking 'progress' with his music, in this case by abandoning the structural norms of popular lyric writing.

The lyrics as presented in the *One Size Fits All* liner notes, as reproduced below, appear as much like prose as poetry or song lyrics.

Did a vehicle  
Come from somewhere out there  
Just to land in the Andes?  
Was it round  
And did it have  
A motor  
Or was it  
Something  
Different

Did a vehicle  
Did a vehicle  
Did a vehicle  
Fly along the mountains  
And find a place to park itself

Or did someone  
Build a place  
Or leave a space  
For such a thing to land.

The melody line, which I describe as Vocal Theme or VT, (see figure 1 over page), plays as one continuous, evolving melody over the stable drum, bass and marimba vamp.

The melody does not fit the natural speech patterns of the lyrics, and along with the anti-poetic lyrics the result could be termed 'anti-lyric'.<sup>174</sup> Anti-lyric implies 'the division of song-writing labour'<sup>175</sup> resulting in a lack of unity between lyric and music, a divided relationship visible within Zappa, working both as a 'musical composer' and 'cultural satirist' separately. By using this technique of 'anti-lyric' Zappa is drawing attention to the meaning of the lyrics as prose.

Within anti-lyric, the emphasis of a song shifts away from its sonorous rhyme towards the detail of its statement, away from *rectitude* of rhyme and rhythm towards the novelty or *interest* of words and ideas.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Griffiths, Dai, 'From lyric to anti-lyric: analyzing the words in pop song', in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Moore, Allan F (Cambridge, 2003), 42.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 54.

<sup>176</sup> Griffiths, Dai, 'From lyric to anti-lyric: analyzing the words in pop song', in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Moore, Allan F (Cambridge, 2003), 55.

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Figure 1

17 **B**  
 Did a ve - hi - cle come from some where out there. *mf* Just to land in the An - des? *f*

22  
 Was it round and did it have a mo - tor. Or *mf*

26  
 was it some - thing diff - er - ent. *mp* *f* *mf*

29 **C** **D**  
 Did a ve - hi - cle. *f* Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle. *mf*

39  
 Fly a - long the moun tains and find a place to park it - self. *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *mf*

43 **E** **F**  
 Or did some - one build a place. *f*

49  
 to leave a space, *f* for such a thing to land. *f*

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The lyrics have little connection to the instrumental vamp underneath them and stand alone as a means for countercultural satire. Lyrics are not the prime focus for Zappa.

I don't have any pretensions about being a poet. My lyrics are there purely for entertainment purposes only - *not to be taken seriously*. Some of them are **truly stupid**, some are slightly less stupid and [a] few of them are sort of funny. Apart from the snide political stuff, which I enjoy writing, the rest of the lyrics wouldn't exist at all if it weren't for the fact that we live in a society where instrumental music is irrelevant - so if a guy expects to earn a living by providing musical entertainment for folks in the U.S.A., he'd better figure out how to do *something* with a human voice plopped on it.<sup>177</sup>

Zappa argues that his lyrics should not be taken seriously, that they should be disregarded and all focus should be on the music. He implies that the music is the reason for the song, and he does not want lyrics to get in the way of his music. Whilst some of his lyrics are outwardly silly they still have a message behind them. Even on debut album *Freak Out!*, by scratching away the strange and silly surface of songs like 'Hungry Freaks, Daddy'<sup>178</sup> and 'Who Are The Brain Police?'<sup>179</sup>, a critique of America's cultural revolution is revealed. Despite his statement that his lyrics are not significant, they play a significant part in the construction of the meanings attached to his music, although as this process often involves satire, the meanings are often the opposite of what they first appear to be.

Zappa had a lot to say, one only has to read one of his many interviews or his account of his battle with the Parent's Music Resource Center (PMRC)<sup>180</sup> who sought to censor popular music lyrics, to see this. However it is clear that the lyrics are not the centre of his work, although profanity, humour, satire, political commentary and attacks on countercultural clichés are further examples of his conceptual continuity

### **Humour & Self-Referentiality**

As discussed, Zappa's music tends to fall into one of two categories, serious and complex instrumentally focused music, and simpler, often humorous, lyric led music. As he states in the 'All About Music' chapter of his book,

Some of the stuff I write is in the '*musically uncompromising boy-is-this-ever-hard-to-play*' category. Then there's the other category - songs in which 'intrigue' lies in the lyrics, rather than

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<sup>177</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 185.

<sup>178</sup> The Mothers Of Invention, 'Hungry Freaks Daddy', *Freak Out!*, Rykodisc 10501 (1967).

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*, 'Who Are The Brain Police?'

<sup>180</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Porn Wars', *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 261-291.

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the music. If a piece intends to actually **tell a story**, I don't build an elaborate accompaniment because it gets in the way of the words.<sup>181</sup>

Simpler, lyric led songs, particularly those based around the humorous or profane such as 'Dinah Moe Humm'<sup>182</sup> tend to limit musical adventurousness to bring the lyric to the fore. 'Valley Girl',<sup>183</sup> is a further example, his most commercially successful single. It again is very simple musically, comprising almost entirely of two riffs, one for the verse and one for the chorus. The music is simply to underpin the satirical monologue by Zappa's eldest daughter Moon Unit, lampooning the language and image of the 'Valley Girl' culture. The song's success however, popularised the valley girl stereotype across the country, somewhat undermining Zappa's critique. The track's success came as a surprise, the band had just returned from a European Tour and were oblivious to its rapid popularity. Zappa has discussed the reasons behind it's success.

There are a couple of things about "Valley Girl" being a hit: First, it's not my fault - they didn't buy that record because it had my name on it. They bought it because they liked Moon's voice. It's got nothing to do with the song or the performance. It has everything to do with the American public wanting to have some new syndrome to identify with. And they got it. There it is. That's what made it a hit. Hits are not necessarily musical phenomena. But as far as my feeling about it goes, I think that if that amuses Americans, well, hey! I'm an all-American boy, and I'm here to perform that function for you.<sup>184</sup>

'Inca Roads' represents a combination of seriousness and humour. It is musically complex with a simple humorous lyric. The final section of 'Inca Roads', after the keyboard solo, showcases the combination of seriousness and humour, starting at letter [S] (see figure 2 over page), after the keyboard solo and marimba cadenza. The vocal reprises a transformed version of the vocal theme (VT - figure 1) as will be explained in the next section.

The final section of lyrics is the same as the opening section of the whole song, however the words 'vehicle' and 'it' are transplanted with 'booger-bear' and 'she' respectively. Zappa liberally reuses a small amount of original material to arrange the track.

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<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, 182.

<sup>182</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers, 'Dinah Moe Humm,' *Over-Nite Sensation*. Rykodisc 10518 (1973).

<sup>183</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Valley Girl', *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch*, Rykodisc 10537 (1982).

<sup>184</sup> Mulhern, Tom, 'Not Exactly Duane Allman,' *Guitar Player*, (February 1983).

Figure 2

286 **S**  
 Did a booger-bear come from somewhere out there. Just to land in the

287 *f*  
 An-des? Was she round and did she have a motor, or was she something different.

289  
 Guaca-mole Queen. Guaca-mole Queen. Quaca-mole Queen.

290  
 At the Armadillo in Austin Texas, here aura,

291  
 or did someone build a place, or leave a space for Chester's thing to land.

The effect of these slight changes is to shift the subject matter of the song to reference an in-joke about the 'booger-bear' award. This was presented onstage to the band member who had slept with the ugliest groupie at the time, as the lyrics go on to reveal, drummer Chester Thompson earned this accolade. By changing 'it' to 'she' Zappa uses the same description of the alien craft to describe the groupie, who by association was evidently so ugly she was alien in appearance. This groupie is later referred to as 'Chester's Gorilla' in 'Florentine Pogen'<sup>185</sup> which opens the second side of the album. Zappa's postmodern referentiality to in-jokes from the band on tour recalls the *Filmore East - Live 1971*<sup>186</sup> album and forms part of his Project/Object philosophy, such references forming part of the conceptual continuity of his work.

<sup>185</sup> Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, 'Florentine Pogen', *One Size Fits All*, Rykodisc 10521 (1975).

<sup>186</sup> The Mothers, *Filmore East - June 1971*, Rykodisc 10512 (1971).

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Did a booger-bear,  
Come from somewhere out there,  
Just to land in the Andes?  
Was she round,  
And did she have a motor,  
Or was she something different?

Zappa goes on to twist the lyrics towards sex by again replacing words in lyrics from earlier in the track, changing 'such a thing' to 'Chester's Thing.'

Or did someone build a place,  
Or leave a space,  
For Chester's Thing to land.

By changing a single word Zappa is writing explicitly about sex, a favorite topic, implying the groupie is the landing space for Chester's Thing.

The 'Gorilla' became part of the live show of the 1974 band, during which a crew member would enter the stage in a gorilla suit or mask. This can be seen on the live concert film *The Dub Room Special*.<sup>187</sup> This film consists partly of the live KCET television performance from which recordings of 'Inca Roads' and 'Florentine Pogen' were later taken. Such lyrics, set to a complex, angular melody that is particularly hard to sing (figure 2), demonstrates that whilst Zappa can be outwardly simple at times, there are often several levels of meaning written in, comprehensible only to fans well versed in Zappa's work. This illustrates his underlying stream of complexity that through referentiality to his wider working world, helps to unify his body of work as a whole, to create his conceptual continuity.

Another example of this self-referentiality is the lyric 'Guacamole Queen'.

Guacamole Queen  
Guacamole Queen  
Guacamole Queen  
At the Armadillo in Austin, Texas her aura.

According to online fan community [www.arf.ru](http://www.arf.ru) 'a place where FZ fans could be entertained by amateur efforts of scholarly oriented tovarischis',<sup>188</sup> the 'Guacamole Queen' was a

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<sup>187</sup> Zappa, Frank, dir., *The Dub Room Special*, (1982).

<sup>188</sup> <http://www.arf.ru/About/index.html>.

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woman named Rikki who baked giant cookies and nachos, containing guacamole, for the Armadillo World Headquarters venue in Austin, Texas.<sup>189</sup> Prior live recordings of the track consequently do not contain the following line.

At the Armadillo in Austin, Texas, her Aura.

The track has developed over time, further levels of depth being added during its development during live performance. By including this reference in the album recording, Zappa is highlighting his compositional process, the track developed on the road, and he is combining humour and self-referentiality over complex metrical content. By providing a further level of detail within the Project/Object, incorporating his experiences into the music, every action he takes, whether in composition, on tour, or during interviews, is part of his body of work and these elements can and should inform each other. In this way his live performances become integrated with, and linked to, his recorded work.

### **Polyrhythms & Rhythmic Confusion**

Much of Zappa's music is characterised by rhythmic complexity and displays his connection to contemporary classical music. However, he takes these techniques and applies them to popular music pushing the boundaries of the genre. This is seen within 'Inca Roads' in the use of polyrhythms to create rhythmic confusion and break up predictable grooves. The opening lyric section is the most prominent example of this, a slow ethereal melody over a stable vamp, is interrupted by a musical and vocal interjection at [C]. A confused vocal conversation ensues (figure 3 over page),

**George:** Sure was different. I ain't never seen nothing like that in my entire life!

**Napoleon:** Whose python boot is that? That ain't my sh-- Wha?

**FZ:** Why don't you sharpen it then?

**George:** Little round ball . . . I could . . . couldn't . . . That-a white cain't do nothin'

**Napoleon:** Je-he-zus!

**FZ:** Mother Mary and Jozuf!

The overlapping vocal outbursts, which due to unpredictable natural speech rhythms create complex polyrhythms between parts, are intercut with more precise instrumental gestures played with precision on drums, bass and marimba. This lopsided call and

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<sup>189</sup> One Size Fits All, Inca Roads, Notes & Comments, <http://www.arf.ru/Notes/Osfa/inca.html>.



'Inca Roads' - The Musical Worlds of Frank Zappa  
Figure 3

Spoken word. Pitches are not intended to be accurate.  
Aim is to show apporximate vocal flow.

Lead Vocals

Backing Vocals

Sure was diff - rent. I aint' ne - ver seen

Whose py thon boot is that?\_

no - thin' like that in my en-tire life.

Why don't you shar - pen it\_ then?\_

That aint' my shi... WHA?

Lit - tle round ball. I could. Could

Je - he - - - zus!

\_\_ n't. That-a white cain't do no - thin'.

Uerhhh.. Heee! Ah Mo-ther Ma - ry and Jo - zuf!

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Inca Roads' by Frank Zappa. It consists of five systems of music, each with a lead vocal line and a backing vocal line. The lyrics are written below the notes. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and phrasing slurs. The lyrics are: 'Sure was diff - rent. I aint' ne - ver seen', 'Whose py thon boot is that?\_', 'no - thin' like that in my en-tire life.', 'Why don't you shar - pen it\_ then?\_', 'That aint' my shi... WHA?', 'Lit - tle round ball. I could. Could', 'Je - he - - - zus!', '\_\_ n't. That-a white cain't do no - thin'.', and 'Uerhhh.. Heee! Ah Mo-ther Ma - ry and Jo - zuf!'. The score is presented in a clean, black-and-white format with standard musical notation.

response between vocals and instruments, as a complete section [C]<sup>190</sup>, breaks the flow of the melody and also the predictability of the accompaniment that comes before it.

<sup>190</sup> Please see Appendix C - Section [C] is too extensive to fit within the body of the text.

## 'Inca Roads' - The Musical Worlds of Frank Zappa

'Inca Roads' was recorded live at KCET television during the production of a special program, much of which can be seen on *The Dub Room Special*.<sup>191</sup> The mix from the TV performance differs from the release on the album *One Size Fits All*, in that there are some additional parts played that were omitted from the album arrangement during the mixing and editing process. The video footage points to an interesting performance element, Zappa uses his hands to conduct the band during this section [C]. The act of conducting signifies art music music, it departs from the expected image and behavior of a rock musician. By using the technique in the confines of a rock performance Zappa is highlighting the division between elite and popular. Once again he is an outsider existing between two distinct and often oppositional musical worlds.

Figure 4

The musical score for Figure 4 consists of four staves. The top staff is for Marimba (Mar.), written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, another triplet of eighth notes, a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes with a B-flat, including two more triplets. The second staff is for Electric Guitar (E. Gtr.), which is marked 'Conduct band.' and contains only diagonal slashes. The third staff is for Bass, written in bass clef, starting with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and a sextuplet of eighth notes, followed by a triplet of eighth notes, and then a series of eighth notes with a B-flat and a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is for Drums, starting with a fortissimo (f) dynamic and featuring a series of eighth notes grouped into septuplets (7) and a quintuplet (5).

Bar 29 (figure 4) is the first occurrence of Zappa's use of polyrhythms. By using a polyrhythm of 7 against 6 at the start of section [C], the rhythmic stability employed up to this point is destroyed. Whilst Zappa conducts a steady 4/4 through the whole section (as indicated on the score), a complex polyrhythm is formed between the marimba, bass and drum parts. Through the first half of the bar, the drums play septuplets. The grouping of seven is unusual within a rock music context, and it creates a sense of acceleration as one more note is fitted into the beat compared to the generally expected sextuplet grouping

<sup>191</sup> Zappa, Frank, dir., *The Dub Room Special*, (1982).

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played by the bass. This irregular grouping is a typical feature of Zappa's music. The irregularity of the septuplet phrase is highlighted when played with the bass, which plays normal sextuplets. The rhythmic confusion here severs the regular pulse of the track, before dropping into unison semiquavers for the third beat of the bar. The final beat of the bar sees the drums now juxtaposed against the marimba, which plays sextuplets whilst the drums play a quintuplet grouping. The overall effect of these polyrhythms across the whole bar is to push and pull the main pulse and groove. The bar seems to accelerate for the first two beats, particularly on beat two, as it is the back beat, before settling down to regular, rigidity on beat three. Finally on beat four the groove seems to slow as the drums pull against the marimba and bass. By inserting this whole section, [C], into a standard rock groove Zappa was highlighting the compositional incongruity between classical and popular music approaches.

Zappa was interested in the rhythms of speech and often incorporated their rhythmic approach into melody lines and most frequently, guitar solos, his solo's are where most often complex polyrhythms occur in his music. He instructed his band to play a stable vamp over which he could explore rhythmically, he tried to talk through his instrument.

I think that's the most direct way to communicate with somebody, using speech rhythms. That really makes a big difference. Because, if you listen to a guy playing nice neat scale patterns and things like that, no matter how skillful he is in making his stuff land on the beat, you always hear it as Music – capital "M" music – lines, chord changes, and stuff like that. Real studied. But if you want to get beyond music into emotional content, you have to break through that and just talk on your instrument, just make it talk. And if you're gonna make it talk, you have to be aware that there's a different rhythmic attitude you have to adopt in order to do that.<sup>192</sup>

Many of these rhythms look unnatural, for example 'The Black Page #2'<sup>193</sup> which uses nested tuplets such as a half note triplet which in turn contains tuplets of five, five and six respectively on each beat of the overall triplet (figure 5 over page). However when listening to these rhythms, they usually sound far more natural than they look. The influence of speech rhythms is usually indirect, the instruments are not using rhythms formed directly from words, there is no script, the instruments sound like they are trying to talk without words.

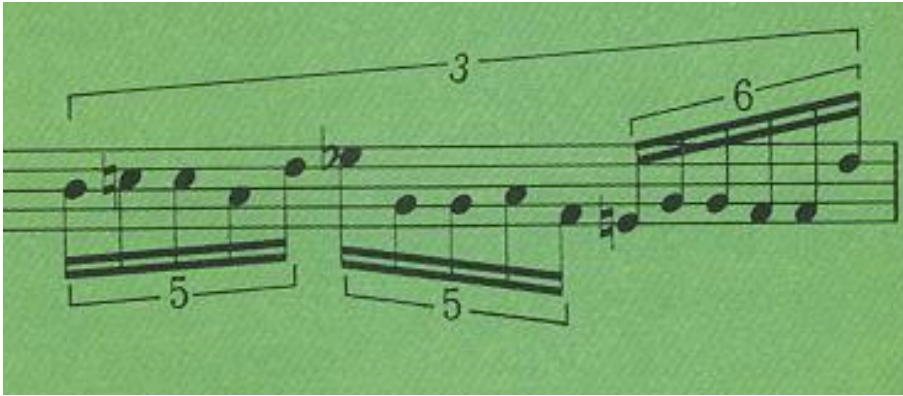
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<sup>192</sup> Milkowski, Bill, 'Frank Zappa: Guitar Player,' *Down Beat*, (Feb, 1983).

<sup>193</sup> Frank Zappa, 'The Black Page #2', *Zappa in New York*, Rykodisc 10524/25 (1978).

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Figure 5



\* 'The Black Page', *Keyboard*, (February, 1987).

A common way to learn polyrhythms is by using verbal phrases to teach the correct rhythm. The phrases 'not difficult,' 'what atrocious weather,' and 'drink up your beer come on please,' can be used to learn polyrhythms of 3 against 2, 4 against 3, and 5 against 3 respectively. Below is a series of polyrhythms displayed using the Time Unit Box System, where each box is a fixed unit of time derived from the lowest common denominator of the two opposing units. Polyrhythms cannot simply be divided into conventional note values, such as crotchet, quaver, and semiquaver divisions, as they divide as unique fractions dependent on the note groupings being played simultaneously. 7 over 6 shows the complexity of the polyrhythm from figure 4.

3	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
2	X			X			X			X			X			X	

NOT DIFFICULT (6<sup>ths</sup>)

4	X			X			X			X			X			X	
3	X				X			X			X			X			X

WHAT ATROCIOUS WEATHER (12<sup>ths</sup>)

5	X			X			X			X			X			X	
3	X				X			X			X			X			X

DRINK UP YOUR BEER COME ON PLEASE (15<sup>ths</sup>)

## 'Inca Roads' - The Musical Worlds of Frank Zappa

7	X					X						X						X					X					X
6	X					X						X							X									X

Each box represents 1/42<sup>nd</sup> (7x6) of the whole group eg, 1 crotchet.

5	X					X						X						X					X					
6	X					X						X						X					X					X

30<sup>ths</sup>

He later experimented extensively with complex and nested polyrhythms when working with the Synclavier in the 1980s as it allowed him to recreate these rhythms with reliable precision.

Most of my compositions today are *written on* and *performed by* a machine - a computer musical instrument called the Synclavier. It allows me to create and record a type of music that is impossible (or too boring) for humans beings to play.

Anything you can dream up can be typed or played into the Synclavier. One of the things I use it for is writing blocks of complicated rhythms, and having them executed accurately by *groups of instruments*.<sup>194</sup>

By using complex polyrhythms, Zappa is highlighting the musical merit and potential complexity of popular music by combining techniques from both musical worlds. In the context of 'Inca Roads', the band, itself a combination of people opposing musical backgrounds, seamlessly switches from a conventional repeating riff, to a complex polyrhythmic instrumental and vocal outburst. It is a vivid contrast that shatters the regularity of the previous passage and highlights both the detail of Zappa's composition and his musicians' ability to realise it.

### Transformation

Zappa generates new sections of the track through the transformation of material introduced in the opening section, VT. The key technique Zappa uses in 'Inca Roads' for this purpose is to take an existing melody, keep the melodic pitch structure, and apply it to

<sup>194</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 172.

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a straight semiquaver rhythm. Thus VT (figure 6) becomes VT\* (figure 7) through rhythmic transformation.

Figure 6

17 **B**  
Did a ve - hi - cle come from some where out there. *mf* Just to land in the An - des? *f*

22  
Was it round and did it have a mo - tor. Or *mf*

26  
was it some - thing diff - er - ent. *mp* *f* *mf*

29 **C** **D**  
Did a ve - hi - cle. *f* Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle.. *mf*

39  
Fly a - long the moun tains and find a place to park it - self. *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *mf*

43 **E** **F**  
Or did some - one build a place. *f*

49  
to leave a space, *f* for such a thing to land.

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Figure 7

3

286 **S**  
Did a boo - ger - bear come from some - where out there. Just to land in the

*f*  
287  
An - des? Was she round and did she have a mo - tor, or was she some - thing diff - erent.

289  
Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Qua - ca - mo - le Queen.

290  
At the Arm - a - dill - o in Aus - tin Tex - as, here au - ra,

291  
or did some - one build a place, or leave a space for Ches - ter's thing to land.

The accents, and therefore the time signatures, of this new passage VT\*, are defined by the lyrical content attached to the melody, and thus bars, or points of emphasis, are divided at intelligible points in the lyric, resulting in unusual time signatures. This places different importance on individual notes, as the melody is given new shape by groupings formed by the lyrics. This reduces the intelligibility of the lyrics. Zappa often uses speech rhythms as a rhythmic source, unusual groupings and polyrhythms surfacing in melodic lines as a result.

If a musical point can be made in a more entertaining way by **saying** a word than by **singing** a word, the **spoken word** will win out in the arrangement.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 163.

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Zappa is dissolving the 'Verbal Space,'<sup>196</sup> as Dai Griffiths puts it, of the original vocal theme.

Verbal Space is the pop song's basic compromise: the words agree to work within the spaces of tonal music's phrases, and the potential expressive intensity of the music's melody is held back for the sake of the clarity of verbal communication.<sup>197</sup>

The music is compromised to enhance the intelligibility of the lyrics in the opening section [B], but this is inverted later [S], where the lyrical intelligibility is compromised to facilitate musical exploration.

Understanding of language is as much based on the natural rhythm of speech as on the words themselves. Whilst lyrics have different rhythms to speech, they tend to retain a rhythmic similarity. Here Zappa is playing with such conventions in his transformations by removing rhythmic variations that suit the lyrics, he sets the lyrics to rigid semiquavers.

Zappa introduces this technique briefly during the middle section of the track at [K] (figure 8), using a shortened version of the melody. At [K] the lyrics from the start of the song are reintroduced but set to the semiquaver rhythm. This section adds new material to VT adding the lines 'Did the Indians first on the bill, Carve up the hill,' to create VT\*+ as illustrated in appendix A.

Figure 8

166 **K**

Did a ve-hi-cle come from some-where out there. Did a ve-hi-cle. Come, \_\_\_\_\_

169

from some-where out there. Did the In - di - ans, first on the bill, \_\_\_ carve up the hill. \_\_\_

When his transformation is applied, the first line of the original verse, plus 'did a vehicle' from the second, fits perfectly into a bar of 4/4, with the word 'come' falling on the

<sup>196</sup> Griffiths, Dai, 'From lyric to anti-lyric: analyzing the words in pop song', in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Moore, Allan F (Cambridge, 2003), 43.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*



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downbeat of the next bar adding emphasis. Due to the natural breaks in the lyrical flow, the drums and bass accent the words, 'did,' 've,' 'come,' 'out,' 'Did,' and 've' (figure 9).

Figure 9

Figure 9 is a musical score for three parts: Lead Vocal (Ld. Vox), Bass, and Drums. The score begins at measure 166, marked with a 'K' in a box. The vocal line is in treble clef and contains the lyrics: "Did a ve - hi - cle come from some - where out there. Did a ve - hi - cle." The vocal melody is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bass line is in bass clef and also marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The drum line is in a standard drum notation and marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The drum part features a complex, syncopated rhythm with accents on various beats, including the downbeat of the second bar.

This gives the impression of a compound time signature of  $5/16 + 6/16 + 5/16$ , before returning to a natural 4/4 as the line ends with 'come' for two bars. The accents from the drums accentuate different points of the melody when compared to the lyrics in the opening section, as there, they play part of the stable backing vamp and are disconnected from the vocal melody. Even when working with what on paper is a 4/4 bar Zappa deconstructs the regular meter to work in compound time. The shift to a straight semiquaver rhythm also transforms the tone of the lyrical line completely, originally it has a speculative tone, the emphasis on the words 'somewhere out there'. It moves to a more demanding tone, rapid-fire, focusing on specifics such as the 'vehicle.'

The complete transformed melody VT\* is introduced in instrumental form but played much faster at [L] and also includes a sped up repetition of [G] at [M] (see figure 10) before restoring the lyrics at [S]. This extended instrumental section at [L], despite appearing first

Figure 10

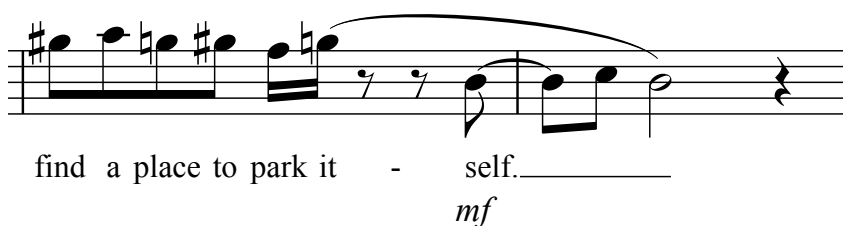
Figure 10 is a musical score for two parts: Moog I and Percussion (Perc.). The score begins at measure 292. The Moog I part is in treble clef and features a complex, rapid-fire melody with sixteenth-note runs. It is marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The Percussion part is in a standard drum notation and features a complex, syncopated rhythm with accents on various beats. It is also marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as brackets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

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chronologically, was created from the lyrics in the final section (figure 7), the phrasing in the instrumental version is based fundamentally on the articulation of the lyrics, whether they are present or not. The development of the structure of 'Inca Roads' can be unravelled, and Zappa's process is evident in the small changes applied to the original melody to adapt it to the rapid fire, semiquaver version.

Comparing VT and VT\* (figures 6 and 7), there are few differences between the two regarding the choice of note. Any melodic change, if the strict rhythmical version (VT\*) is taken as the control, in VT, is due to small vocal flourishes or ornaments on individual words at the end of lines which fall on natural breaks in the music. Any deviation may have been improvised by the performer and brings a natural resolve to a line. Resolution is not required in the transformed version as each line runs fluidly into the next. With only drum accompaniment, the melody line is self contained harmonically and thus has no need to conform to the harmony of the underpinning music. Furthermore the natural improvisation of an accomplished singer may be the reason behind melodic ornamentation such as on 'self' at the end of bar 41 continuing into bar 42 (figure 11). The same reasoning applies to the naturalistic gliding between notes over a melodic leap, it is almost a singers prerogative to add these elements of expression at their discretion, particularly in popular music.

Figure 11



Only the four bar section at [E] (figure 12 over page) is completely omitted from the transformed version of the melody VT\*, a short call and response between the instrumentalists and the vocalists where the vocal part itself is further split between the lead and backing vocals. The backing vocals reinforce the statement 'Park it. Park it' in a comically gruff manner. This section, like the polyrhythmic break and spoken word section at [C] as described earlier, functions primarily to break up the flowing melody and repetitive groove of the opening section of the track. It is representative of Zappa's impatience, a need for near constant progression and change. Zappa's use of transformation and rules to adapt and create new material demonstrates the influence of classical music on his compositional process.

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Figure 12

43 **E**

Ld. Vox

Mar. *ff*

Piano *ff*

Bass *ff*

Drums *ff*

Park it se - e - elf.

45

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox *Gruffly*

Mar. *ff*

Bass

Drums

Park it. Park it.

Figure 13

36 **D**

Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle.

*f* *mf*

289

Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Qua - ca - mo - le Queen.

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A final example of Zappa transforming a melody line is with 'guacamole queen', a late addition to the track as discussed earlier. To create the melody for 'guacamole queen' He transforms three bars from [D] and also drops the pitch by an octave (see figure 13). 'Did a vehicle, did a vehicle, did a vehicle,' is reworked to create bar 288, 'Guacamole Queen, Guacamole Queen, Guacamole Queen', three groups of five semiquavers forming a bar of 15/16.

At [D] (figure 13), Zappa uses the repeating line 'Did a vehicle?', to explore different rhythmic variations of the group of five which is later presented in straight form with 'guacamole queen.' 'Did a vehicle' in speech is a natural group of five equal length beats, which like 'Guacamole Queen', when expressed in normal speech, has a naturally straight rhythm to it. However Zappa deviates from the natural rhythm exploring three separate variants of the same melodic phrase. The rhythmic variations are as follows: first a straight crotchet version set on the beat in 5/4, followed by a straight semiquaver version identical to 'Guacamole Queen', and finally a shift away from the regular rhythm to two semiquavers followed by a quaver triplet. The effect of the final variation, is creating a polyrhythm with the accompaniment, this gives the illusion of slowing down.

Polyrhythms are only interesting in reference to a steady, metronomic beat (implied or actual) - otherwise you're just wallowing in rubato.<sup>198</sup>

In Zappa's use of transformation and variation, creating new material by adapting and reusing existing material he highlights his knowledge of classical music norms. Even on a small scale as in the 'did a vehicle' example where he expands simple material through variation, Zappa seeks to extract as much mileage from key themes as possible. Transformation and variation of this kind are not particularly common in popular music, Zappa therefore appears to be blurring the distinctions between two musical worlds by applying the conventions of one to another.

### **Challenging Virtuosity**

'Inca Roads' highlights the influence of classical music on Zappa through instrumental parts designed to highlight the virtuosity of musicians in his band. Like a concerto, 'a work

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<sup>198</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 180.

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in which a solo instrument(s) is contrasted and blended with the orchestra.<sup>199</sup> 'Inca Roads' can be roughly split into three different movements, plus a short written cadenza for solo marimba. An important development of concerto form were the cadenza sections 'in which the soloist could display his skill by extemporization.'<sup>200</sup> Like more recent concerti, Zappa's uses a composed cadenza, 'a significant change [to the form] since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.'<sup>201</sup> The soloist in this case is Ruth Underwood playing the marimba. Two extended solo sections for guitar and keyboards are similar to the older style of cadenza as they are improvised. However, stylistically, they owe more to Zappa's Jazz and Blues influences. A popular form, Jazz represents a confluence of African and European music, and differs from European music in its fluid, spontaneous approach to time, drawing upon the same compound rhythms that we have seen in Zappa's music.

The marimba cadenza [R] (figure 14 over page) is a further example of 'Inca Roads' demonstrating Zappa's art/popular musical dualism. The 4 bar marimba cadenza at [R] is significant in its reuse of material from earlier in the track, reproducing note for note, the 7/16 section at [O] at double original speed. This is an example of information that only became clear during transcription. This unaccompanied section highlights the virtuosity of marimba player Ruth Underwood. It also has distinct similarities to 'Rollo Interior'<sup>202</sup> demonstrating yet again Zappa's ideas of conceptual continuity.

A similarly virtuosic marimba passage falls at the end of the song, performed in unison with the drums. It bears similarities to the classic improvised rock track ending, where performers tend to play as-fast-as-possible in an instrumental flourish to end the piece, something of a rock cliché that has become part of popular musical coding. However in this case, Zappa has again written out the part specifically, a fast run down marimba then vibraphone, facilitated by the instruments layout onstage, lined up one after the other so the performer can play off the bottom end of the marimba into the top of the vibraphone (see figure 15). The passage has the same function as the rock ending cliché, similarly

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<sup>199</sup> Kennedy, Michael, ed., 'Concise Dictionary of Music', (Oxford, 1952, 1996, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition), 156-157.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Rollo Interior', movement in, 'St. Alphonso's Pancake Breakfast', *Apostrophe* ('), Rykodisc 10519 (1974).

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Figure 14

280 **R** ♩ = 96 approx.  
Mar. *ff*  
Drums *ff*



281  
Mar.  
Drums



282  
Mar.  
Drums



283  
Mar.  
Drums

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Figure 15

The image displays a musical score for the track 'Inca Roads' by Frank Zappa, specifically focusing on measures 300 and 301. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system (measures 300-301) includes staves for Maracas (Mar.), Vibes, Synth 1, Bass, and Drums. The Maracas part begins at measure 300 with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a complex rhythmic pattern. The Vibes part is silent in this system. Synth 1 and Bass parts are also silent, with Synth 1 having a whole rest and Bass having a whole note with a flat. The Drums part features a consistent, driving rhythm. The second system (measures 301-302) includes staves for Vibes, Synth 1, Bass, and Drums. The Vibes part begins at measure 301 with a complex melodic line. Synth 1 and Bass parts are silent, with Synth 1 having a whole rest and Bass having a whole note with a flat. The Drums part continues with the same driving rhythm. A double bar line is present between the two systems.

slowing down towards the end of the track. Through its specificity, Zappa is at once embracing the rock music tradition by ending a track in this manner, particularly as the track is recorded in a live setting, and simultaneously opposing it by scoring it out exactly.

A further display of virtuosic musicianship is at [M] and bar 292 where keyboard player George Duke restates the melody from [G] and [J] which bookends the guitar solo, MT1 becomes MT1\* (figure 10 over page). The restatement of this theme is at a faster tempo than previously and is furthermore condensed into a single bar by reducing the note values from straight semiquavers to sextuplet semiquavers. Breaking up the extended melody line, as Zappa does in the first section of 'Inca Roads' at [C] with polyrhythms and

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Figure 10

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Moog 1 and Percussion. The Moog 1 part is written in treble clef with a 6/4 time signature. It begins at measure 292 with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, with three groups of six notes each, indicated by brackets and the number '6'. The final group of six notes is followed by a triplet of three notes, indicated by a bracket and the number '3'. The Percussion part is written in a drum set notation with a 6/4 time signature. It also begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The rhythm consists of a series of eighth notes, with three groups of three notes each, indicated by brackets and the number '3'. The final group of three notes is followed by a triplet of three notes, indicated by a bracket and the number '3'. Both parts end at measure 11/16.

overlapping vocals, by restating a key theme from earlier. It highlights the scope of the piece, lending unity to the whole structurally. Furthermore, this musical flourish highlights the virtuosity of the musician in an obvious way to the average listener, to whom, as is often the case in rock music, the speed at which a musician can play is equatable to a measurable, and impressive, level of skill.

Zappa writes about musicians tendencies for showboating, to draw attention to themselves in live performance.<sup>203</sup>

That's okay. They should all get The Blow Job - but they should get it *the honest way* - they should **earn it**, by playing the songs right. Sometimes they try to cheat...and, folks, it is not a pretty sight.<sup>204</sup>

Such passages as [M] (figure 10) can be seen as legitimate showboating within the piece, as they have been prearranged and stem from existing material. Zappa is performing his role as bandleader, maintaining 'corporate discipline'<sup>205</sup> within the band by providing such material. It reinforces Zappa's standpoint that his hybrid classical/rock band is capable of the accessible rock music displays of virtuosity, but that they need control by regimented discipline, again crossing the boundaries between musical idioms.

### Similarity to Progressive Rock: a Classical Influence.

'Inca Roads' displays many other examples of Zappa's classical influence, particularly in the structural development of the piece as will be discussed later. This classical influence points to key similarities with progressive rock. Zappa's broader classical influence, and particularly that of contemporary classical music, manifests itself through extended, yet fractured, frequently shifting melodic lines, unusual time signatures and changing tempos

<sup>203</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Road Rats', *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 168-170.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*



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between sections. These techniques are common in progressive rock, however Zappa does not sound like a progressive rock band, nor is he usually described as such.

The fast 7/16 section at [O], played in tight unison, bears the greatest resemblance to progressive rock. This is primarily because the synthesizer is at the fore, playing the main melody line. The synthesizer's prominence is similar to British progressive rock bands such as Yes and Genesis, in which, formally trained keyboard players Rick Wakeman and Tony Banks were particularly prominent. This section of 'Inca Roads,' [O], is similar to the extended Genesis composition 'Firth of Fifth.'<sup>206</sup> The track, based primarily on themes written by Banks, has a middle section [4:34-5:46] played on synthesizer which, like 'Inca Roads', encompasses unusual time signatures of 13/16 and 15/16 when it deviates from a standard 4/4. Whilst 'Firth of Fifth' dwells on the same repeated melody without deviation for over a minute, Zappa limits his similar melody to a single playing and moves on.

Unlike progressive rock however, where long compositions tend to display their classical influence through strict use of typical classical structure. For example *Close to the Edge*<sup>207</sup> by Yes is [18:43] long, is structured in sonata form, and uses orchestral instrumental sounds, which highlights its classical influence and the intrinsic sophistication associated with it. Zappa's classical influence is more subtle, not sticking rigidly to a recognisable form. He tends to construct songs containing multiple parts and ideas which often have very little to do with one another. Structurally they borrow from neither classical or popular idioms. Complex pieces such as 'Inca Roads', showcase Zappa's belief that you should write for yourself. 'The *Ultimate Rule* ought to be: **"If it sounds GOOD to YOU, it's bitchen; and if it sounds BAD to YOU, it's shitty."**<sup>208</sup> What makes them popular rather than classical, is often hard to pinpoint in a Zappa track, 'they are songs, in large part, because Zappa says they are.'<sup>209</sup>

Zappa combined elements from different pieces to create new ones, 'taking a melody from song A and a solo from song B and perhaps placing that song (call it C) in a context of

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<sup>206</sup> Genesis, 'Firth of Fifth,' *Selling England by the Pound*, (1973).

<sup>207</sup> Yes, 'Close to the Edge', *Close to the Edge*, (1972).

<sup>208</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 188.

<sup>209</sup> Lowe, Kelly Fisher, *The Words and Music of Frank Zappa*, (Nebraska, 2007), 7.

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other songs creating a meaning that can be called D.<sup>210</sup> This is an example of his attempts to create threads of conceptual continuity in his work, alluding to classical composers viewed for their body of work. A live solo from 'Inca Roads' for example is reused and set to a Latin/Disco theme, of entirely different beat and melodic structure to 'Inca Roads' to create a new song called 'On the Bus'. Zappa is here using his technique of *xenochrony*<sup>211</sup> in which various elements of different performances, from completely different sources, are melded together to create a new piece of music. Zappa draws upon classical music techniques, but integrated other ideas because as he put it, 'I find music from the classical period boring because it reminds me of "painting by numbers."' <sup>212</sup>

### Improvisation

Frank's solos were like sonic sculptures, he never did the same thing twice, unless it was a melody line that was integral to the song. - Steve Vai<sup>213</sup>

'Inca Roads' contains two extended, improvised solos. The first is a guitar solo performed by Zappa himself, the latter a keyboard solo mainly on Rhodes piano and synthesiser, played by George Duke. Both solos highlight the symbiotic relationship developed between the band members in their tenure in the band. The full version of the guitar solo can be heard on the live album of the Helsinki concert, *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 2*.<sup>214 215</sup>

The guitar solo is improvised over a simple vamp, which shifts from C to D every other bar. Zappa's solos often have a simple harmonic backing, staying rigidly within one tonal center, allowing Zappa to explore different modes. In 'Inca Roads,' Zappa plays mostly in G major over the vamp, a transposition to the dominant from the C major of the rest of the

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<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>211</sup> Marshall, Bob, interviewed, Zappa, Frank, (October 21-22 1988).

<sup>212</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 186.

<sup>213</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).

<sup>214</sup> Frank Zappa, 'Inca Roads', *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 2*, Rykodisc 10563/64 (1988).

<sup>215</sup> The *One Size Fits All* 'Inca Roads' solo is made up of the following sections of the YCDTOSA, Vol. 2 version. [3:56 - 4:27] [4:51 - 5:26] & [5:46 - 6:05].

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track. The vamp however, pulls the solo back toward C, the sub-dominant of G major, implying the C Lydian mode. The major Lydian mode, with its raised 4<sup>th</sup> degree, introduces a tritone, a dissonance that lends a sense of unease and tension. However, the vamp shifts up a tone to D every other bar, implying the dominant or mixolydian mode. D mixolydian resolves the tension, a standard major scale with a flattened 7<sup>th</sup> degree. This mode is often used in jazz for its harmonic compatibility with dominant seventh chords. The simple vamp under Zappa's musical meanderings, create a regular system of tension and release. Furthermore, harmonically, the bass player, whilst playing around a basic vamp riff, elaborates extensively to reinforce the implied harmony of Zappa's modal shifts.

Zappa's solo incorporates many unusual rhythms that are idiosyncratic of his playing, he tries to talk with his instrument. The backing vamp keeps a steady 4/4 and seeks to accentuate Zappa's rhythmic meandering where possible. When Zappa tries to imply a complex polyrhythm, the accompanying musicians are expected, where possible, to identify it and play a complimentary rhythm, within the wider meter.

In order to engage on the type of improvisational escapades that seem natural to me. I must be accompanied by a 'specialized' rhythm section. A soloist choosing to work in this odd style ultimately ends up a hostage - he can only go as far into the 'experimental zones' as his rhythm section will *allow* him to go. The problem lies in the polyrhythms. The chances of finding a drummer, a bass player and a keyboard player who can *conceive* of those polyrhythms - let alone identify them fast enough to play a complementary figure *on the moment*, are not good.<sup>216</sup>

Zappa relies on his rhythm section to work with him to help him build an improvisation. His approach to improvisation is built on an aversion to 'regularity.' He seeks the creation of tension and release, clearly a connection to his classical influence and why he is outspoken on his dislike of manufactured, formulaic popular music, resulting in his systematic undermining of the genre through parody when working in that idiom. 'Any composition (or improvisation) which remains *constant* and "*regular*" throughout is, for me, equivalent to watching a movie with only "*good guys*" in it, or eating cottage cheese.'<sup>217</sup> However in his adoption of improvisation, he again roots his music within popular music, moving away from the score and focusing on the individual creativity of the performing musicians, rather than solely that of the composer.

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<sup>216</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 180.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.*, 181.

## Structure

Structurally 'Inca Roads' is complex and does not conform to any traditional song structure, instead it progresses linearly, in that respect sharing similarities with through-composition. 'A term describing composition with a relatively uninterrupted continuity of musical thought and invention.'<sup>218</sup>

In the context of art song, 'through-composed' describes settings in which a repeating verse structure is contradicted by the use of substantially different music for each stanza, unlike most hymns and folksongs, where strophic texts are reinforced by an equivalent repeating musical structure. [...] The term is sometimes also applied to instrumental music. Haydn's Symphony no.45 ('Farewell'), for example, can be considered through-composed because cross-connections between the movements foster a sense of continuity throughout the work.<sup>219</sup>

'Inca Roads' has similarities with elements of this description. In the context of art-song, 'Inca Roads' does not have a repeating verse structure in the traditional sense. However, it does have one repeating melody VT that is used in original or transformed form for all recurrences of the lyrics. Under this melody the music changes substantially between the original statement of the melody and the transformed version. However, the music used under the transformed version VT\* retains the same basic elements in each appearance.

Compared to the instrumental variant of through-composition however, 'Inca Roads' has more similarities. As illustrated in the breakdown of structure and the use of themes below, Zappa reuses themes liberally but transforms and re-orchestrates them with almost every reoccurrence. This creates a sense that the listener constantly hears new material even when it has been previously introduced, by hiding the origins of particular themes Zappa hints at the influence of through-composition, however, the heavily section structure suggests otherwise. Zappa picks and chooses elements he likes from formal compositional practices. The level of transformation is so heavy that repetition is largely disguised. This is particularly prevalent in the middle of the track, [I] to [Q], when the densest amount of new material is introduced alongside heavily transformed recurring themes. It was only through the process of transcription itself that this level of reiteration became apparent, it was not clear through simply listening to the track. Themes may be disguised, but they are recognised at some level, fostering continuity through almost subconscious familiarity. Furthermore, the technique of introducing cross-connections to

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<sup>218</sup> Rumbold, Ian, 'Through-composed', *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, (Accessed 19 January, 2011).

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*

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create continuity resonates with Zappa's own 'conceptual continuity' idea. This also means there are many layers to the music, allowing the listener to hear more and more detail upon repeated listening.

The track can be divided into three main sections, each divided by an extended instrumental solo. It is the longest song on the album at [8:54] due in part to the extended guitar solo lasting from [2:01] to [4:37]. Below is a detailed breakdown of the structure in terms of its melodic content. Zappa often reuses themes, and constructs the song out of a surprisingly few elements, considering the diversity of the overall sound, developing them and manipulating their arrangement and orchestration to construct the song.

All key themes are shown in **bold** in can be found in Appendix A, score letter or bar numbers are displayed on the Y axis.

- [A] Intro - Main Riff x 8
- [B] **Vocal Theme (VT)**
- [C] Polyrhythmic Interjection
- [D] **VT continued**
- [E] Call & Response Interjection
- [F] **VT continued**
- [G] **Melodic Theme 1 (MT1)** x2  
- w/ added synth x2
- [H] Guitar Solo
- [I] **Melodic Theme 2 (MT2)** x2  
- 2<sup>nd</sup> time w/ added harmonisation
- [J] **Melodic Theme 1** x2  
- w/scalic synth figure x2  
- 1 Bar repeated timpani figure. **(TMP)**  
- Taken from the final beat of **MT1**
- [K] **Vocal Theme Transformed plus new material (VT\*+)**  
(rhythmic reduction to constant semiquavers)  
- 1 Bar - 1<sup>st</sup> three bars of **VT** + repeat of **VT** bar 1 and 1<sup>st</sup> 1/2 of **VT** bar 2  
- 1 Bar - held note 'come'  
- 1 Bar **(TMP)**  
- 11/16 Bar - 2<sup>nd</sup> 1/2 of **VT** bar 2 then new 'Indians' material cont. into

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- 6/8 Bar - 'first of the bill, carve up the hill'

[171] **Fanfare** - run down plus chordal resolve

[L] **VT\*** - Marimba + synth play complete semiquaver version of original **VT**

[M] **MT1\*** - triplet semiquavers

[N] Repeat of [K] - **VT\*+**

- Minus **TMP**

- Minus 'from somewhere out there'

[187] **Fanfare**

[O] 7/16 **Melodic Theme 3 (MT3)**

[206] **Fanfare\*** - simple version

[P] **Melodic Theme 4 (MT4)**

[211] **Fanfare+** - extended version

[Q] Keyboard Solo

[R] Marimba Cadenza **MT3** - played solo in demisemiquavers

[284] **Fanfare\***

[S] **VT\*** - Vocals (same as [L])

[292] **MT1\***

[T] **VT\*+** - repeat of [N]

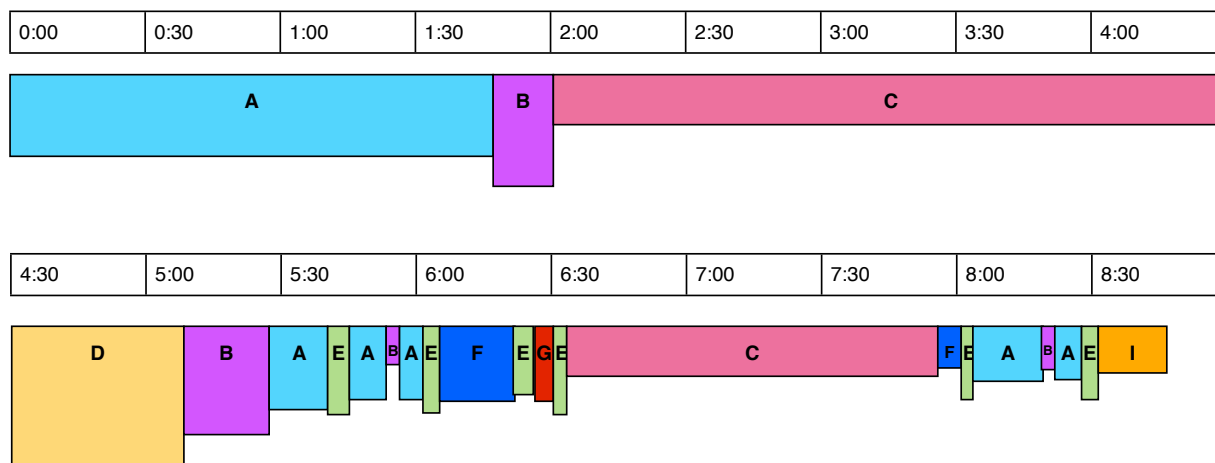
[297] **Fanfare**

[U] Outro - mallets + drums run down

[303] **TMP** x3 + 'On Ruth'

A further illustration of the structural breakdown on 'Inca Roads' can be found in appendix B, also shown below. It gives an approximate timeline of the structure of the track visually depicting different repeating themes. The depth of each box gives an indication of the depth of orchestration, letters (with their corresponding colours) do not correspond to score letters and are simply to give a visual indication of the broad use of similar material. For example, Block A is contained within the solid box in the structure list above despite the interruptions. The second half of the track is clearly far denser than the first half.

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'Inca Roads' is constructed from seven different themes and bridging sections, all but two of which occur several times in some variation during the course of the track. At its simplest the track follows a structure of A C A C A, however, the repeating A sections are broken up by complex interjections, these interjections themselves forming a kind of repeat. Zappa was not content with simplicity, he had to add a fundamental layer of complexity to his music.

Excluding the solos, only MT4, and both interjecting sections, score letters [C] & [E] (contained within the blue A block), do not reoccur. Whilst MT2 also does not recur later in the track, it plays the melody twice developing the theme with added harmonisation and mock-operatic vocals the second time.

All the remaining themes are reused several times to create 'Inca Roads,' all with different purposes. The shorter themes recur as bridge sections to move between more extended melodic themes, for example MT1 which acts as a bookend for the guitar solo and MT2, before the track launches into denser, more technical material. MT1 is further modified to MT1\* (figure 10), played incredibly fast by synthesizer and doubled rhythmically by percussion, to act as a short virtuosic flurry (found at [M] & [292]) segueing between VT\*+ and VT\* on two occasions ([L to N] and [S to T]).

Zappa recycles an entire section of the track in a disguised manner that is difficult to register just by listening to the track. It only became apparent having written out the structure by themes of melodic content. This repeat of material is disguised by reversing the order of the melodic themes whilst keeping the themes themselves identical melodically. The further disguise is using VT\* whereby the second time [S] the

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orchestration changes, from heavy instrumental unison to octave unison vocals with solo drum accompaniment. The two repeated sections are outlined above by the dashed boxes. In the first instance at [171] it plays Fanfare - VT\* - MT1\* - VT\*+ and later repeats this at [284] to create Fanfare\* - VT\* - MT1\* - VT\*+ Only small adjustments occur in the end of internal sections to allow them to flow together, these adjustments are primarily in the drum part, the fills of which were clearly improvised in the moment.

The focal and most memorable melody of the track is clearly the Vocal Theme, as, after its original statement, it is reused and augmented, in rhythmically condensed form, five times in both instrumental and lyrical settings. VT is furthermore used as the melodic basis for Zappa's carefully constructed satire. The lyrics stand on the popular music side of his work, alongside the riff based opening section, whilst the remainder of the track, in its diversity and technical accomplishment, stands amongst the 'classical'.

Through the structure, Zappa's contemporary classical influence is clearly visible in its linear construction. In his book, Zappa speaks of a system of weights and measures, influenced by his 'idol'<sup>220</sup> Varèse.

In my compositions, I employ a system of weights, balances, measured tensions and releases - in some ways similar to Varèse's aesthetic. The similarities are best illustrated by comparison to a Calder mobile: **a multicoloured whatchamacallit dangling in space, that has big blobs of metal connected to pieces of wire, balanced ingeniously against little metal dingleberries on the other end.** Varèse knew Calder, and was fascinated by these creations.

So, in my case, I say: *'A large mass of any material will "balance" a smaller, denser mass of any material, according to the length of the gizmo it's dangling on, and the "balance point" chosen to facilitate that danglement.'*<sup>221</sup>

Zappa is simply saying here that more complex material can be offset, and thus maintain the interest of an audience over the course of the piece, by more expansive, accessible material. This is certainly the case in 'Inca Roads,' the opening, lyric-led section of the track, along with the guitar solo, balance the rapid-fire density of the middle and end sections of the song. A balance between accessible 'popular,' and intellectual 'classical' music, a juxtaposition of supposed simplicity and complexity, humour and seriousness. This dichotomy is fundamental to Zappa's approach to every aspect of his music.

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<sup>220</sup> Zappa, Frank, 'Edgard Varèse: The Idol of My Youth', *Stereo Review*, (June 1971). 61-62.

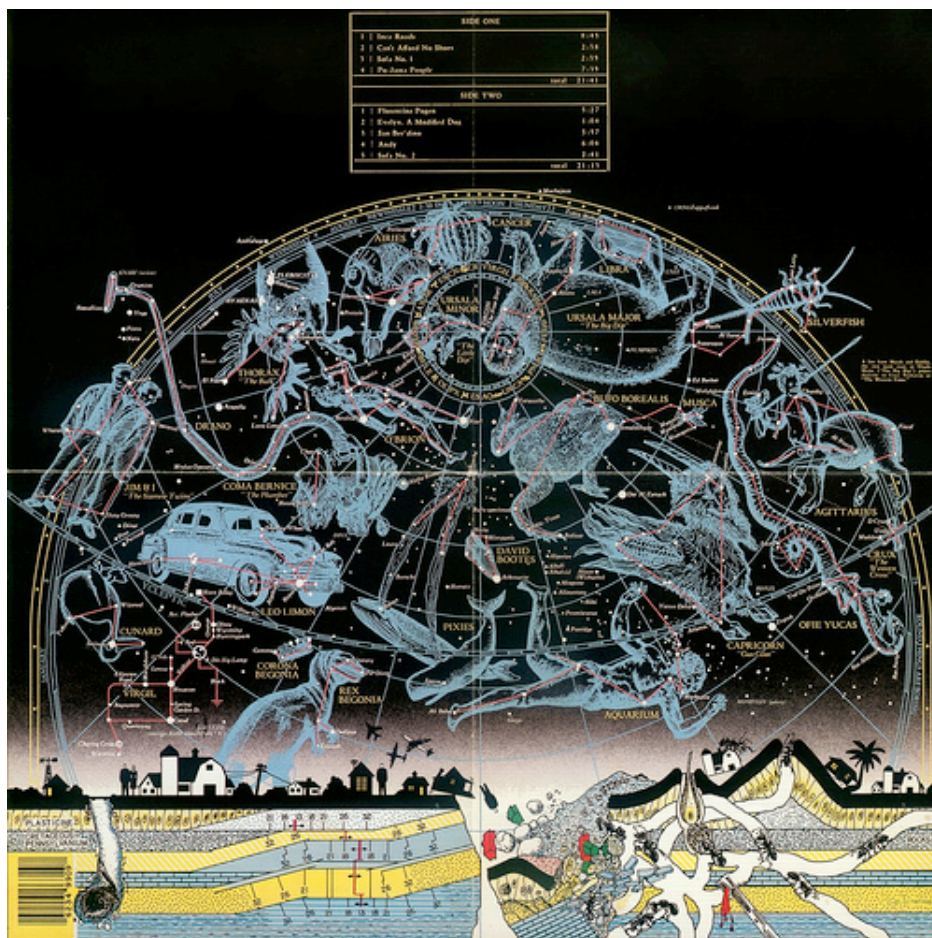
<sup>221</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 163.



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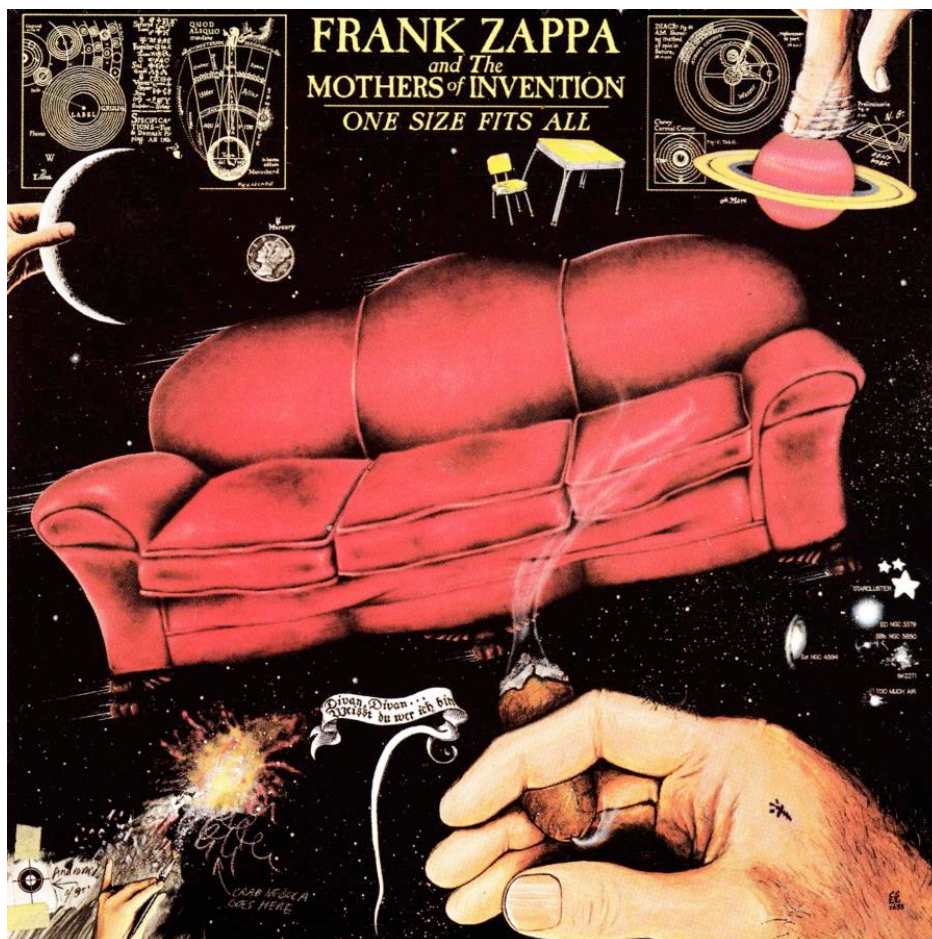
### Album Art

The back cover (see over page) of *One Size Fits All* is a star chart mocking astronomy by containing fake celestial bodies such as 'Rex Bogonia,' 'Leo Limon' and 'Jim & I "The Siamese Twins."' The stars that populate the chart are also renamed, either as soundalike, comical versions of the original stars, or seemingly random people or places, such as London tube stations, or people with some connection to Zappa such as family, groupies, artwork and crew members, 'Herbycon' for example indicating Herbie Cohen, Zappa's manager. A complete list of the star and constellations on the chart, compared to a traditional star chart and their possible significance can be found.<sup>222</sup>



<sup>222</sup> <http://members.shaw.ca/fz-pomd/stars.html>.

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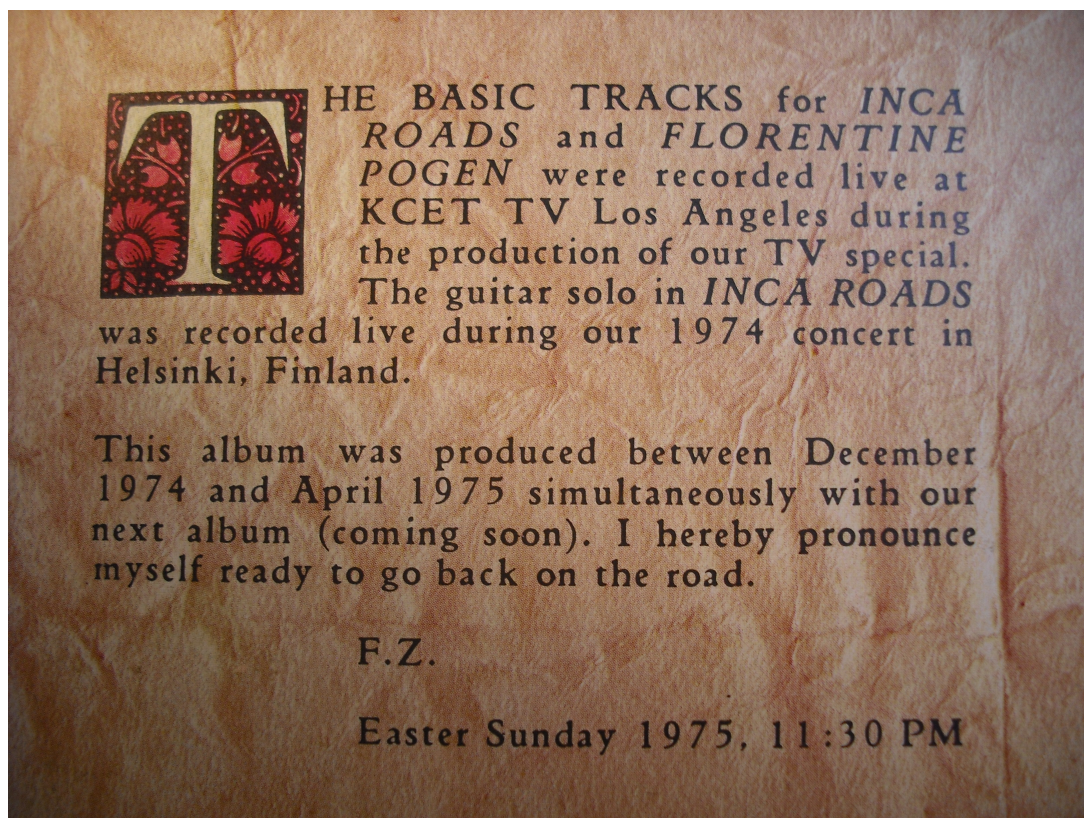
The star chart is consistent with the celestial theme of the album cover (above), an image of a disembodied, cigar clutching hand, presumably God, surveying His vision of the universe, a giant maroon sofa hovering in space, firmly in the foreground, a reference to the song 'Sofa' which appears in two different forms on the album. A speech scroll issues from the bottom of the image bearing the motto 'Divan, Divan... Weisst du wer ich bin.' 'Divan' is a pun between the German word for Sofa and 'divine,' whilst the remainder of the statement translates as 'Do you know who I am.' This is presented as a question from God to the universe, a universe that is all encompassing, hence *One Size Fits All*, in which a humble sofa is the most important thing. This phrase is also what stars say when they are famous and want to get in somewhere for free.

The sofa image perpetuates Zappa's criticism of the passivity induced by TV culture. To the technicians of mass culture who declare 'we live in a visual age' the sight of the sofa is shocking, because it reminds them where all the people who are watching TV actually are. [...] By projecting the banality of bourgeois respectability on to the heavens, Zappa summons a special disgust.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>223</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 272.

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The album art fits neatly with the cosmological imagery in 'Inca Roads.' The pseudo-history of Däniken and Zappa's mockery of it recurs in the presentation of the lyrics in the gatefold sleeve of the album. The lyrics are printed over a mock aged parchment background in a font evoking an 'archaic script.' Zappa is presenting the lyrics as a work of historic religious scripture, enhanced by the illuminated initial in Zappa's forward (see over page), which ends with 'I hereby pronounce myself ready to go back on the road. F.Z. Easter Sunday 1975, 11:30 PM'. Zappa is deliberately using religious language and presentation to tie the theme of the front cover and the lyrics of 'Inca Roads' which discuss the supposed celestial influence on ancient civilisations, with aliens mistaken for Gods that passed knowledge on to the native peoples. Zappa is simultaneously mocking religion and mass culture, implying that they are exactly the same thing. Religion is a commodity, a target for consumer capitalism.



### Analysis Summary

In 'Inca Roads', Zappa is employing a multi-layered approach to convey his views lyrically. On the surface, the lyrics convey a simple UFO story, a component of hippie culture. They conform to Zappa's explanation of lyrical intent, purely for entertainment purposes, particularly the sexual innuendo and self-referentiality in the latter verses, and on the

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surface are somewhat stupid. The lyrics could be disregarded through his own reasoning, they are present because of a need in popular music to have lyrics attached to music. Furthermore, the presence of the lyrics set the track within a popular music idiom.

A secondary layer is his subtle parody of hippie culture by lampooning the work of Erich von Däniken. Through the nonchalant tone of the lyrics, Zappa sets a level of critical distance from his target, through which to channel the satire. He does not specifically discount the theories of Däniken, however, given the tradition of mocking his subjects in previous works, and the filmic science-fiction references, it is safe to say that Zappa was opposed to the pseudoscience of Däniken and particularly its significance within the counterculture, the wider topic of which is a consistent target throughout his work, whether working from within it or not.

Finally, through the pun 'ink erodes,' Zappa is highlighting the impermanence of written culture, the fading of metanarratives. Written history is a result of those suitably positioned to record it, and thus, is biased towards their point of view. The history of less powerful people, from their perspective, is often lost. In doing this, particularly through veiling the pun in the title, Zappa is placing himself within the realm of post-modernity.

Furthermore 'Inca Roads' also parodies the pseudo-cosmological music of progressive rock bands such as The Moody Blues, ELP and Yes. These bands used quasi-spiritual lyrics to create the illusion of being 'deep,' thus ingratiating themselves into the countercultural ethos.

Besides countercultural satire, 'Inca Roads' also incorporates high art influences adding a sophisticated level of experimentation into popular music. Zappa incorporates creative processes beyond the popular music norm introducing complex polyrhythms and meter to deviate from the rigid 4/4 of popular music, the music is never complacent, particularly in the more experimental latter half of the track. Here Zappa deviates from traditional popular music, attempting to subvert popular music norms, by using a hybrid group of conservatoire and popular musicians. He introduces far greater detail to the music by using classical arrangement techniques, transforming material from the start of the track to create new material. These techniques were only possible with a band of particular prowess, centered around percussionist Ruth Underwood who possessed conservatoire

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training and through which, was able to realise the jagged terrain of Zappa's complex melodies and abruptly shifting arrangement.

'Inca Roads,' lies between his caustic social commentary and profanely whimsical songs. The first half is parody of Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?*, thus a detailed critique of a specific aspect of the counterculture, the latter shifting to the self-referential, profane lyrics typical of the Flo & Eddie band. A lyrical juxtaposition of first, serious critique and second, populist whimsey, complexity versus simplicity. Musically the same juxtaposition is present but in reverse order. Simple, accessible, rock music first and complex, elitist classical music second, broken up by instrumental solo's firmly rooted in jazz, which by its nature blends elite 'classical' and popular culture. 'Inca Roads' clearly presents Zappa as the product of two musical worlds, a dichotomy between 'classical' and 'popular.' A postmodern approach which collapses 'the hierarchical distinction between elite and popular culture.'<sup>224</sup>

### **Issues of Transcription**

The act of transcription itself raised an issue concerning the presentation of popular music using the conventions of musical scoring. The issue is one of conveying the necessary rhythmic precision needed to recreate the musical groove which is a fundamental element of popular music. Groove by its nature its instinctual between the musicians playing and is learned within the popular music idiom. Compromises had to be made in the score between accuracy and legibility. The issue lies partially on the original source text of the composition. In classical music, the text is the score itself, it is the definite article and therefore any subsequent performance of the text is subject to the interpretation of the conductor and thus the musicians. In popular music, the text is the actual recording, any transcription of that recording is subject to the individual interpretation of the transcriber who may also be working to a specific specification regarding the intended audience for the score, for example creating a piano lead sheet or full score, different levels of detail which subsequently influences interpretation. The potential for error is introduced in the recreation of popular music by musicians working from a transcription, as it is not the original text. They are working from a source already diluted by the idiosyncrasies and perspective of another individual.

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<sup>224</sup> Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and postmodernism*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993). 132.

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Figure 16



Figure 17



A specific example of compromise for the score in 'Inca Roads' is bar 32 (figure 16). The version of this bar present in the score is not the absolute level of accuracy. The rhythms in the bar are pushed ahead of the beat such that they can be written out precisely by using compound meter and very small notes values. This is shown in the second scored example (figure 17). However, scoring the phrase this way is difficult to understand and recreate because of the tiny divisions involved, thus this level of detail is removed to promote legibility. The pushed rhythms can be recreated from the simplified score based on the understanding that popular musicians will naturally push or pull against the meter depending on the overall groove of the piece. The score is not the text, the recording is, therefore the score is designed to supplement the original recording. Anyone attempting to

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recreate the piece faithfully should use the recording as the source material and assimilate the feel and therefore groove of the track from the recording, using the score simply to provide the core musical data on which the 'feel' is built.

to treat popular music as simply another genre (as simply another 'sort' of music that people listen to) and to make use of the techniques developed for the study of the bourgeois music canon, is similarly insufficient.<sup>225</sup>

The conventions of 'classical' music scoring are insufficient to tackle popular music accurately where a fundamental element of the music is an unspoken, sympathetic relationship of rhythm and groove between musicians that has developed through twentieth century musical traditions that stand opposed to, a reaction against, 'classical' music. Writing 'swung' for example, at the start of a score is simply insufficient, a patronising lack of information that reduces the talents of practitioners of popular music to 'amateur'<sup>226</sup> status.

## Conclusion

Zappa's output can be defined as a critique of orchestral and pop traditions and is thereby structured around a negative dialectic: established cultures are at the same time imitated and taken apart. But just as each individual Zappa score seems to reject the utopian idea of Aesthetic unity, taking this very disunity as an aspect of Zappa's style helps us find threads of consistency across his thirty-year career.<sup>227</sup>

Arved Ashby provides a concise summary of Zappa's output, by embracing and yet questioning established musical traditions of 'classical' and 'popular' music, and furthermore any sub-genres within them he wished to use as inspiration for his musical critique, Zappa operates above classification by any specific genre when treating his work as a whole. His theory of 'conceptual continuity' binds his individual works together through often obscure and unrelated references which also permeate beyond his music, with the intention of 'unifying the collection.'<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Moore, Allan F., 'Introduction', in *Analyzing Popular Music* ed. Moore, Allan F (Cambridge, 2003), 2.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>227</sup> Ashby, Arved, 'Frank Zappa and the Anti-Fetishist Orchestra', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), 557-606; 559.

<sup>228</sup> Zappa, Frank, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, (New York, 1989), 140.

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The one thing that's been consistent about the albums that I've put out is that each one appears to go in a different direction, but if you look a little closer that it's all part of one continuous whole, and that's the way it's designed.<sup>229</sup>

The question asked at the beginning of this thesis, 'should Zappa be regarded as a "composer" in the "classical" sense, or as an "artist" in the "popular music" sense?' has proven a difficult one to answer definitively. There are arguments to support both sides, as a 'composer' he embraces sophisticated musical practises from high art, beyond what is expected from a popular musician. Zappa defines himself as a composer and certainly if you look at his wider output, beyond the albums discussed here, Zappa released several albums of orchestral and experimental music once he had the financial means, time and fan base to support these activities, however the majority of his output are albums of popular music, the number of orchestral or more experimental albums are severely limited, most likely due to financial and logistical reasons plus the greater time required to complete such projects. In the time period discussed in this thesis however, the majority of evidence is for Zappa as a popular music 'artist' who approached his work with a 'classical' methodology. His artistic approach often denied him the credibility that is attached to the 'classical' composer label. The approach taken with 'Inca Roads' supports this outcome, the track is complex popular music, complex as it contains many techniques imported from the classical world, the aim of which was to progress the limits of popular music. 'Inca Roads' was chosen as the case study as it represents a high point in his popular output, the track is an excellent example of the successful blend of styles, it is adventurous without becoming inaccessible. This is supported by the track becoming both a fan and live performance favorite, performed on almost every tour for the rest of Zappa's career without, as is often the case with his music, major alterations to suit a particular band lineup.

Popular musicians have to work in a variety of mediums beyond simply the music. The context surrounding popular music, is a significant influence on its composition. It has a sociocultural context at its core, external factors influence its inception; the media; the record company; the musical trend of the moment; without conforming to the demanding factors at a particular point in time, an individual or groups music would not be released. Zappa was particularly adept at adapting to controlling factors surrounding him,

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<sup>229</sup> Longfellow, Matthew, dir., *Classic Albums: Over-Nite Sensation & Apostrophe (')*, (2007).



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conforming to these factors just enough to be successful and therefore use his position to direct his satire from within.

If we define Zappa therefore as a popular music 'artist' then many of the attributes that define him as such are also key influences of his compositional style. These are namely a willingness to surrender to a level of accessibility for exposure and ultimately, financial gain. Throughout his career he manipulated his music and subsequently his image to adapt to the intended market, for example becoming part of the LA Freak scene to release his debut album and releasing accessible, commercial material highlighting its comedic value with *Over-Nite Sensation*. Despite these adaptations, his image is always predicated on the basis of the slightly wacky outsider, appealing to the counterculture through his perceived nonconformity.

A further defining influence were the members of his band at any one time, who were mostly of a popular music background. The individual capabilities, background and musical preference of his musicians directly influenced the music he produced. Zappa tried to incorporate the talents of his musicians, particularly if they had classical backgrounds, playing to their strengths, and pushing them to their limits often by removing them from their comfort zones. A key component of his style was actively seek musical progression, trying to push the boundaries of what could be done in any genre he chose to operate in. Eddie Jobson, a member of Zappa's touring band in 1976-1977 said,

That's his strength, he stretches his musicians beyond their capabilities all the time. And then when it comes to a performance he'll just relax it slightly to a point where people can actually play what he wants...Such outrageous stuff, so technical, so difficult, and you've got to remember it all as well. You've got to learn it fast because Frank gets impatient if you don't.<sup>230</sup>

Zappa's willingness to work in and subvert almost any given genre that circumstance gave him the opportunity to pursue, led to a wide variety of styles in his output. The only key linking factor is an obsession for composition a desire for constant development, the only way he could produce such a vast output was by drawing upon every stylistic musical factor he had available to him, working through constant critique of music and culture, within both the classical and popular musical worlds. A dichotomy between the two that can be traced back to his early influences of the experimental Varèse and guitar led R&B.

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<sup>230</sup> Miles, Barry, *Zappa: A Biography*, (New York, 2004), 256.

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'Inca Roads' represents the development of his compositional style at that point in his career because it combines all of his key influences and synthesises accessible popular sensibilities with progressive classical music experimentation. Up to that point in his work Zappa tends to compromise, within the overall context of popular music, working either in either experimental, abstract styles, such as *Lumpy Gravy*, or banal and accessible, lyric led satire such as on *Filmore East - June 1971*. 'Inca Roads', combines the accessible whilst subverting it through targeting countercultural paraphernalia, lampooning *Chariots of the Gods?*, using the technique of anti-lyric to challenge pop music lyrical convention. By introducing extended classical melodies, complex structure, and furthermore experimental transformation technique, Zappa is also subverting high-art by introducing it into popular music. 'Inca Roads' subverts two musical worlds that are traditionally divided, by combining the two. The track is one of the most popular amongst fans, perhaps because it combines every facet of Zappa's compositional style without any individual element becoming dominant.

This work indirectly touches on the question of whether Zappa was a modernist or postmodernist, it is a difficult question to answer partly as he never considered himself in such terms and therefore cannot be ascribed to have intentionally worked to conform to such labels. A whole new body of work could be written to answer the question and would have to consider his entire output, something that could not be done here. In the context of this thesis, Zappa's work can be considered an architect of postmodernity as his work is mainly concerned with the breakdown of pop and high art. He was active and in the right location when postmodern theory began to emerge 'among artists and critics in New York in the 1960s and taken up by European theorists in the 1970s.'<sup>231</sup>

When individual albums are considered independently of his wider work, different conclusions can be reached depending on the concept of each album. James Borders makes an excellent case for Zappa displaying modernistic qualities in the early albums *Lumpy Gravy*, *Uncle Meat*, and *Burnt Weeny Sandwich*, yet he still concedes that

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<sup>231</sup> Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 131.

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by contrasting broadly different approaches to composition, moreover Zappa was implicitly rejecting the kind of hairsplitting that set the "modernist" music of composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez apart from more accessible "avant-grade" works.<sup>232</sup>

These albums stand out from his wider work due to an emphasised sense of experimentation, a self-consciousness and 'a rejection of narrative structure in favour of simultaneity and montage'<sup>233</sup> that places them within a modernist eclecticism. They cannot be defined strictly as modernist however, as they also display many hallmarks of post-modernism.

Zappa hardly approached his work with an overarching theoretical intent to be modernist or postmodernist, however he challenges modernisms hostility to mass-culture, he had a professed willingness to reap the profits of his work, even reinventing his music and image between albums to target commercial gain. The work of modernists 'reproduces unhelpfully the distinction between the high arts and "low", less serious, popular arts.'<sup>234</sup> This is a stance that he was evidently opposed to as he embraced these extremes and combined the two, working in the grey area between musical worlds. Postmodernity is displayed in the way he dissolves the boundary between art and everyday life, the collapse of the 'hierarchical distinction between elite and popular culture.'<sup>235</sup> Zappa transforms images of real life, introducing them to classical form and style. Furthermore he fragments time both at a minute level through his use of complex polyrhythms and anti-lyric in his music, and by producing albums of wildly different content that stand individually as self-contained concepts yet are connected through his theory of 'conceptual continuity', drawing threads through time between his wider body of work.

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<sup>232</sup> Borders, James, 'Form and the Concept Album: Aspects of Modernism in Frank Zappa's Early Releases', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (Winter, 2001), 118-160; 119.

<sup>233</sup> Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 131.

<sup>234</sup> Mcrobbie, Angela, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, (New York, 1994), 14.

<sup>235</sup> Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 132.

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Lyotard seems apt when describing Zappa, he says,

As for the artists and writers who question the rules and possibly share their suspicions by circulating their work, they are destined to have little credibility in the eyes of those concerned with 'reality' and 'identity'; they have no guarantee of an audience.<sup>236</sup>

Ultimately, Zappa's music 'presents highly crafted and detailed work in the guise of chaos.'<sup>237</sup> He is an advocate for the progression and potential of the popular musician and the progression of the genre. He demonstrated through his critique of specific genres that rigidly conforming to the stylistic specifics of a single genre is limiting, development is only possible through embracing every genre and combining elements from them to create something new. He was a composer in a popular setting and represents the evolution of the popular music artist, through his work he says, 'why can't pop be clever?' and 'why can't classical be accessible?'

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<sup>236</sup> Lyotard, Jean Francois, 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', in *Postmodernism: A Reader* ed. Docherty, Thomas, (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), 41.

<sup>237</sup> Watson, Ben, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, (London, 1994), 260.

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Appendix A

VT

17 **B**

Did a ve - hi - cle come from some where out there. Just\_\_ to\_\_ land in the An - des?

*mf* *f*

22

Was\_\_ it round and did it\_\_ have\_\_ a mo - tor. Or

*mf*

26

was it\_\_ some - thing diff - er - ent.

*mp* *f* *mf*

29 **C** **D**

Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle.

*f* *mf*

39

Fly\_\_ a - long the moun tains\_\_ and find a place to park it - self.

*mf* *f* *ff* *f* *mf*

43 **E** **F**

Or\_\_ did some - one build a\_\_ place.

*f*

49

to leave a\_\_ space, for such a thing\_\_ to land.

*f*

VT\*

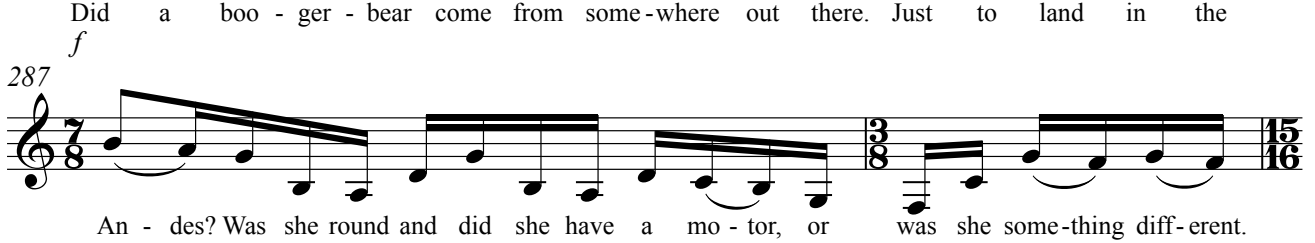
286 **S**



Did a boo - ger - bear come from some - where out there. Just to land in the

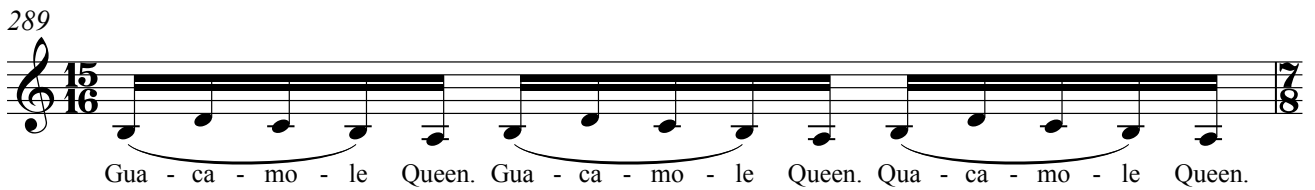
*f*

287




An - des? Was she round and did she have a mo - tor, or was she some - thing diff - erent.

289



Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Qua - ca - mo - le Queen.

290



At the Arm - a - dill - o in Aus - tin Tex - as, here au - ra,

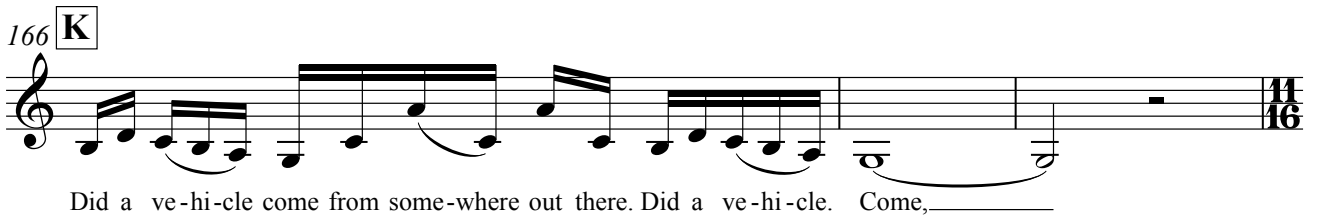
291



or did some - one build a place, or leave a space for Ches - ter's thing to land.

VT\*+

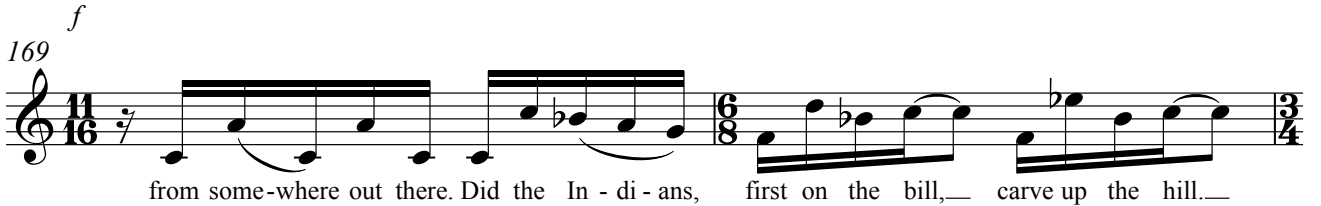
166 **K**



Did a ve - hi - cle come from some - where out there. Did a ve - hi - cle. Come, \_\_\_\_\_

*f*

169



from some - where out there. Did the In - di - ans, first on the bill, \_\_\_\_\_ carve up the hill. \_\_\_\_\_

'Inca Roads' - The Musical Worlds of Frank Zappa

MT1

52 **G**

Flute *f*

Mar. *f*

Moog 1 *mf*

Bass *f* *ff*

Timpani *ff*

Drums *f* *ff*

Detailed description: This musical score for MT1 consists of six staves. The Flute staff (treble clef) starts at measure 52 with a 'G' time signature and a forte (*f*) dynamic, playing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Maracas staff (treble clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Moog 1 staff (treble clef) plays a similar melodic line to the flute but with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Bass staff (bass clef) provides a rhythmic foundation with eighth notes, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic and ending with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The Timpani staff (bass clef) is mostly silent, with a few notes at the end of the section marked *ff*. The Drums staff (percussion clef) plays a consistent eighth-note pattern, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic and ending with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.

MT1\*

292

Moog 1 *ff*

Perc. *ff*

Detailed description: This musical score for MT1\* features two staves. The Moog 1 staff (treble clef) starts at measure 292 with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and triplets. The Percussion staff (percussion clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with triplets, also marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. Both staves end at measure 11/16.

MT2

142 **I**

Ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

147

ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

Detailed description: This musical score for MT2 features two vocal staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts at measure 142 with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a triplet of eighth notes followed by a melodic line. The lyrics are "Ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah". The second staff (treble clef) starts at measure 147 with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a sextuplet of eighth notes followed by a melodic line. The lyrics are "ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah".

MT3

190 **O**

194

198

202

MT4

208 **P**

Mar. *mp* *f* 3

E. Gtr *f*

Bass *mf*

Drums *f*

**TMP**

165

Timpani

Drums

Musical notation for Timpani and Drums at measure 165. The Timpani part is in bass clef with a 7/4 time signature. The Drums part is in a standard drum notation with a 7/4 time signature. Both parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes.

**Fanfare**

171

Flute

Mar.

Piano

Moog 1

Bass

Drums

Musical notation for the Fanfare section, measures 171-174. The section is in 3/4, 4/4, and 2/4 time signatures. It features a variety of instruments: Flute, Maracas, Piano, Moog 1, Bass, and Drums. The notation includes dynamic markings (ff, f), articulation (accents), and phrasing (brackets, slurs). The Flute part starts with a rest in 3/4 time and then plays a melodic line in 4/4 time. The Maracas, Piano, and Moog 1 parts play a rhythmic pattern in 3/4 time. The Bass part plays a melodic line in 4/4 time. The Drums part plays a rhythmic pattern in 4/4 time.

Fanfare\*

206

Mar. *ff*

Moog 1

Bass

Drums



207

Mar.

Moog 1

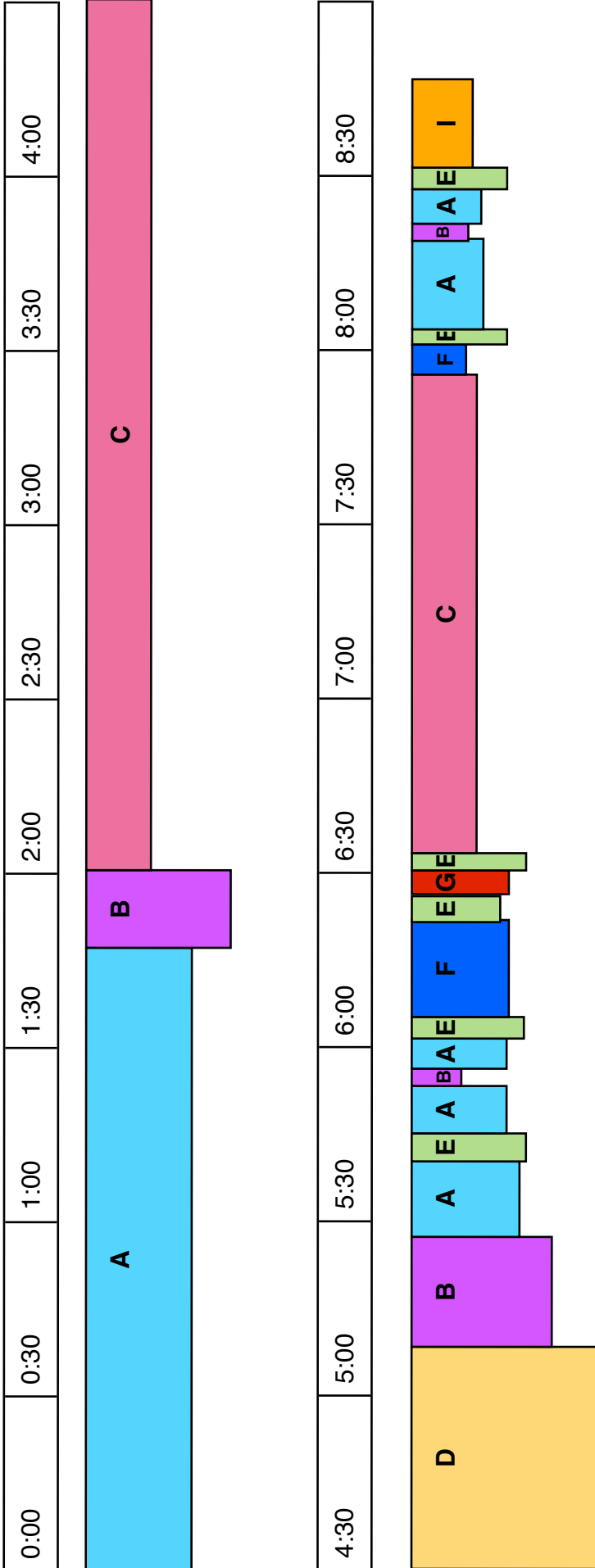
Bass

Drums

6

6

Appendix B



Frank Zappa

# Inca Roads

from One Size Fits All (1975)

Transcribed by Benjamin Wall



# Drum Notation Legend

Drum Kit

The diagram illustrates the notation for various drum kit components on a five-line staff. The components and their corresponding symbols are:

- Kick:** Represented by a double bar line on the bottom line.
- Pedal Hi-Hat:** Represented by a quarter note on the bottom line with an 'x' below it.
- Snare:** Represented by a quarter note on the second line from the bottom.
- Ghost Snare:** Represented by a quarter note on the second line from the bottom with an 'x' below it.
- Toms:** Represented by a bracketed group of five quarter notes on the third line from the bottom.
- Hi-Hats:** Represented by a bracketed group of two quarter notes on the fourth line from the bottom, labeled 'Closed' and 'Open'.
- Crash:** Represented by a quarter note on the fifth line from the bottom with an 'x' below it.
- Ride:** Represented by a quarter note on the fifth line from the bottom with an 'x' below it.

# Inca Roads

Composed by Frank Zappa  
Transcribed by Benjamin Wall

**A** ♩ = 120 approx.

Double-tracked on record, solo in performance.

Lead Vocals

Backing Vocals

Flute

Marimba

Vibraphone

Rhodes Piano

Synthesizer 1

Synthesizer 2

Electric Guitar

Bass Guitar

Timpani

Percussion

Drum Kit

*f*

*mf*

Simple, thin, sine wave

White noise + cutoff/resonance to manipulation through LFO to create improvised spaceship, wooshing effects.

Tin Can Percussion. Approximate pitches.

3

Mar.

Synth 2

Bass

Drums

Musical score for measures 3-4. The Maracas part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests. Synth 2 is represented by a dotted line. The Bass line consists of eighth notes and rests. The Drums part shows a complex rhythmic pattern with various note values and rests.



5

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

Musical score for measures 5-6. The Maracas part continues with the same rhythmic pattern. Synth 1 has a melodic line with notes and dynamics markings like *f* and *ff*. Synth 2 is a dotted line. The Electric Guitar part has a chord with a *ff* dynamic. The Bass and Drums parts continue with their respective rhythmic patterns.

7

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



9

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

Bass

Drums

11

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

Bass

Drums

Musical score for measures 11-12. The Maracas part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests. Synth 1 has a sustained note that changes pitch. Synth 2 has a dotted line. The Bass part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests. The Drums part has a complex rhythmic pattern with various note values and rests.



13

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

*f*

*muted strumming.*

*f*

Musical score for measures 13-14. The Maracas part continues with a rhythmic pattern. Synth 1 has a sustained note with a forte dynamic. Synth 2 has a dotted line. The Electric Guitar part has muted strumming with a forte dynamic. The Bass part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests. The Drums part has a complex rhythmic pattern with various note values and rests.

15

Mar.

Synth 1

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



17 **B** Warm falsetto where possible.

Ld. Vox

Did a ve - hi - cle come from some -

*mf*

Mar.

Bass

Drums



19

Ld. Vox

where out there. Just\_

*f*

Mar.

Bass

Drums

21

Ld. Vox

to land in the An - des?

Mar.

Bass

Drums



23

Ld. Vox

Was it round and did it have a

*mf*

Mar.

Bass

Drums



25

Ld. Vox

mo - tor. Or was it some -

*mp*

Mar.

Bass

Drums

27

Ld. Vox

- thing diff er - ent.

*f* *mf*

Mar.

Bass

Drums



29 [C]

Spoken word. Pitches are not intended to be accurate.  
Aim is to show approximate vocal flow.

Ld. Vox

*George Duke* Sure was diff - rent. I aint' ne - ver seen

Bk. Vox

*Napoleon Murphy Brock* Whose py - thon - boot is that?

Mar.

*ff* 3 3

E. Gtr

Conduct band.

Bass

*ff* 6 3 3

Drums

*f* 7 7 5



31

Ld. Vox  
no - thin' like that in my en - tire life.

Bk. Vox  
That ain't my shi... WHA?  
*Frank Zappa* Why don't you shar - pen it then?\_\_\_\_\_

Mar.  
E. Gtr  
Bass  
Perc. China cymbal  
Drums

*ff*



33

Ld. Vox  
Lit - tle round ball. I could. Could n't. That - a white cain't do no - thin'.

Bk. Vox  
Je - he - zus!  
Uerhhh.. Heel Ah

Mar.  
Piano  
E. Gtr  
Bass  
Drums

*ff*

8<sup>va</sup>

35

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

E. Gtr

Drums

Mo - ther Ma - ry and Jo - zef!



36

Ld. Vox

Mar.

Bass

Drums

Did a ve - hi - cle.

**D**

*f*

*ff*

*f*

6 6 6 6 6



37

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

Mar.

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

Did a ve - hi - cle. Did a ve - hi - cle.

*mf*

*ff*

*f*

*f*

3 3

*ff* cle.

39

Ld. Vox

Fly a - long the moun - tains and

*mf* *f* *ff* *f*

Mar.

Bass

Drums

41

Ld. Vox

find a place to park it - self.

*mf*

Mar.

Bass

Drums

43 **E**

Ld. Vox

Park it se - e - elf.

*ff* *f*

Mar.

Piano

Bass

Drums

46 **F**

Ld. Vox *f* Or did some - one build a\_ place\_ to

Bk. Vox *Gruffly* *ff* Park it. Park it.

Mar. *f*

Bass *f*

Drums *mf*



49

Ld. Vox leave a\_ space,

Mar.

Bass

Drums



50

Ld. Vox *f* for such a thing to land.

Mar.

Bass

Drums

52 **G**

Flute *f*

Mar. *f*

Synth 1 *mf*

Bass *f* *ff*

Timpani *ff*

Drums *f* *ff*



59

Flute

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2 *glide* *f*

E. Gtr *ff*

Bass *f* *ff*

Timpani *ff*

Drums *f* *ff*

63 **H** Rhodes improvises switching between implied C + D root every bar using jazz chords.

Piano

E. Gtr

Guitar solo in C Lydian

Bass

Gtr Solo: 4 Bar Vamp between C + D, notation as a guide. Improvised to support guitar solo.

Drums

*mf*



65 x 19 (on recording)

Bass

Drums



139

Ld. Vox

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

Ah ah ah

*ff*

Final 2 Bars cued by Guitarist's signal.

*mf* *f*

*mf* *ff*

V.S.

143 **I**

Ld. Vox  
ah ah ah ah ah ah

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

146

Ld. Vox  
ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

Vibes  
*f* 6

E. Gtr  
6

Bass

Drums

149

Ld. Vox  
ah ah ah *sim.*

Bk. Vox  
*ah's sim.*

Vibes

Synth 1  
*f*

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



152

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

Synth 1

E. Gtr  
*fff*

Bass

Drums



155

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

Synth 1

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



159

Flute

Mar.

Synth 1

E. Gtr

Bass

Timpani

Drums

J

161

Flute

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

E. Gtr

Bass

Timpani

Drums

*ff*

*f*

*ff*

*f*

*ff*

*f*

*ff*

163

Flute

Mar.

Synth 1

Synth 2

E. Gtr

Bass

Timpani

Drums

*f* *ff* *ff*



165

Ld. Vox

Bass

Timpani

Drums

**K**

Did a ve - hi - cle come from some - where out there. Did a ve - hi - cle.

*f* *f* *mf*

167

Ld. Vox

E. Gtr

Bass

Timpani

Drums

Come,



169

Ld. Vox

Mar.

Piano

Bass

Drums

from some - where out there. Did the In - di - ans, first on the bill, \_ carve up the hill...

*ff*

171

Flute

Mar.

Piano

Synth 1

Bass

Drums



174 **L**

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

177

Flute *ff*

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums



181

Flute *ff*

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

182 **M**

Mar.  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{11}{16}$

Synth 1  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{11}{16}$

Bass  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{11}{16}$

Perc.  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{11}{16}$

Drums  $\frac{6}{4}$   $\frac{11}{16}$

Detailed description: This system contains five staves. The Maracas staff is mostly silent. The Synth 1 staff features a melodic line with sixteenth-note triplets and a triplet of eighth notes, marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The Bass staff has a simple melodic line. The Percussion staff shows a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth-note triplets, marked with a fortissimo (fff) dynamic. The Drums staff has a few scattered notes, including a triplet of eighth notes.



183 **N**

Flute  $\frac{11}{16}$   $\frac{7}{16}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Mar.  $\frac{11}{16}$   $\frac{7}{16}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Synth 1  $\frac{11}{16}$   $\frac{7}{16}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Bass  $\frac{11}{16}$   $\frac{7}{16}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Drums  $\frac{11}{16}$   $\frac{7}{16}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

Detailed description: This system contains five staves. The Flute staff has a melodic line starting in the 7/16 measure, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The Maracas staff has a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The Synth 1 staff has a melodic line with sixteenth notes. The Bass staff has a melodic line with eighth notes. The Drums staff has a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes.

187

Flute

Mar.

Piano

Synth 1

Bass

Drums



190

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums



195

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

200

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

205

Mar.

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

*ff*

207

Mar. Synth 1 Bass Drums

Musical score for measures 207-208. The score is in 6/8 time. It features four staves: Maracas (Mar.), Synth 1, Bass, and Drums. Measure 207 shows the Maracas playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords. Synth 1 plays a simple melody. Bass plays a steady eighth-note line. Drums play a pattern with sixteenth notes and a triplet. Measure 208 continues the patterns, with the Maracas playing a more complex rhythmic figure.



208

Mar. E. Gtr. Bass Drums

*mp* *f* *mf* *f*

**P**

Musical score for measures 208-211. The score is in 6/8 time. It features four staves: Maracas (Mar.), Electric Guitar (E. Gtr.), Bass, and Drums. Measure 208 starts with a 'P' (Piano) dynamic marking. The Maracas play a complex rhythmic pattern. The Electric Guitar plays a fast, melodic line with a 'f' (forte) dynamic. The Bass plays a steady eighth-note line with a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic. The Drums play a pattern with eighth notes and rests, marked with 'f' (forte). Measure 209 continues the patterns. Measure 210 shows the Maracas playing a triplet. Measure 211 concludes the section with a final rhythmic pattern.

V.S.

211

Flute

Mar. *ff*

Piano *ff*

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums

3

3

6

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a band. The score is arranged in six staves. The top staff is for Flute, starting at measure 211. The second staff is for Maracas, marked *ff*. The third staff is for Piano, also marked *ff*. The fourth staff is for Electric Guitar (E. Gtr). The fifth staff is for Bass. The bottom staff is for Drums, featuring a complex rhythmic pattern with a sixteenth-note run in the final measure. The Flute and E. Gtr parts have a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure. The Maracas part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Piano part has a bass line with chords. The Bass part has a simple line. The Drums part has a pattern of eighth notes and rests.

213

Flute

Mar.

Piano

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



215

♩ = 192 approx.

Q Solo starting with Rhodes, progressing to Synthesizers.

Piano

Bass

Drums



220

Bass + Drums Improvise under Keyboard solo around following riffs.

Bass

Drums

224

x 7

Bass

Bass line for measures 224-227. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 224: G2, A2, B2, C3. Measure 225: G2, A2, B2, C3. Measure 226: D3, E3, F3, G3. Measure 227: D3, E3, F3, G3. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Drums

Drum line for measures 224-227. The notation is on a five-line staff with a double bar line at the beginning. It features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and quarter notes on the bottom line. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.



276

Bass

Bass line for measures 276-279. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 276: G2, A2, B2, C3. Measure 277: G2, A2, B2, C3. Measure 278: G2, A2, B2, C3. Measure 279: G2, A2, B2, C3. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Drums

Drum line for measures 276-279. The notation is on a five-line staff with a double bar line at the beginning. It features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, and quarter notes on the bottom line. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

280 **R** ♩ = 96 approx.  
Mar. *ff*

Drums *ff*

281  
Mar.

Drums

282  
Mar.

Drums

283  
Mar.

Drums

284

Mar. *ff*

Piano *f*

E. Gtr *f*

Bass *f*

Perc. *ff*

Drums *ff*

286 [S] ♩ = 104 approx.

Ld. Vox *f*

Bk. Vox *f*

Drums *f*

Comic Voice

Did a boo - ger - bear come from some - where out there. Just to land in the

Did a boo - ger - bear come from some - where out there. Just to land in the

287

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

Drums

An - des? Was she round and did she have a mo - tor, or was she some - thing diff - erent.

An - des? Was she round and did she have a mo - tor, or was she some - thing diff - erent.

289

Ld. Vox *ff*  
 Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Qua - ca - mo - le Queen.

Bk. Vox  
 Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Gua - ca - mo - le Queen. Qua - ca - mo - le Queen.

Drums *ff*

290

Ld. Vox *f*  
 At the Arm - a - dill - o in Aus - tin Tex - as, here au - ra,

Bk. Vox  
 At the Arm - a - dill - o in Aus - tin Tex - as, here au - ra,

Drums *f*

291

Ld. Vox  
 or did some - one build a place, or leave a space for Ches - ter's thing to land.

Bk. Vox  
 or did some - one build a place, or leave a space for Ches - ter's thing to land.

Drums

292

Synth 1 *ff*

Bass *ff*

Perc. *ff*

Drums



293

Ld. Vox *11/16*  
 Did a boo-ger bear come from some where out there. Did a boo-ger-bear come from some - where out there.

Bk. Vox *11/16*  
 Did a boo-ger bear come from some where out there. Did a boo-ger-bear come from some - where out there.

Bass *11/16*  
*f*

Drums *11/16*  
*f*



295 **T**

Ld. Vox *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
 Did the In - di - ans, first on the bill. Carve up her hill.

Bk. Vox *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
 Did the In - di - ans, first on the bill. Carve up her hill.

Flute *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*

Mar. *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
*f*

Piano *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
*f*

Synth 1 *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
*f*

Bass *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*  
*f*

Drums **T** *11/16* *7/16* *6/8* *2/4*

298 U

Synth 1

E. Gtr

Bass

Drums



300

Mar.

Vibes

Synth 1

Bass

Drums



301

Vibes

Synth 1

Bass

Drums

302

Synth 1

Drums

*fff*

303

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

Synth 1

Timpani

Drums

On Ruth!

*f*

On Ruth!

*ff*

*fff*

304

Ld. Vox

Bk. Vox

E. Gtr

Timpani

Perc.

Drums

On Ruth!

*ff* Ah - ha. *f* That's Ruth!

On Ruth!

*fff* Ah - ha. *ff* On Ruth!

*fff*

# **'INCA ROADS' - THE MUSICAL WORLDS OF FRANK ZAPPA**

**Benjamin Wall**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis seeks to explore the many influences and development of Frank Zappa's compositional style through his career, up to and including the release of 'Inca Roads' from the album *One Size Fits All*. Zappa's work is divided into to key stylistic periods dependant on the band he had at his disposal at any one time. Major shifts in style occurred with each of these periods and the influencing factors for both the catalyst of the shifts and the musical development and influences are examined chronologically, using key albums as reference points within each stylistic period.

The latter half of the thesis is a detailed analysis of the track 'Inca Roads', given context by the preceding investigation into Zappa's stylistic shifts up to that point in his career, and is conducted under the following headings; meanings in the title 'Inca Roads'; lyrical form; humour and self-referentiality; transformation; polyrhythms and rhythmic confusion; challenging virtuosity; similarity to progressive rock and classical influence; improvisation; and structure. The aim is to investigate the development of Zappa's compositional style at that point in his career, using 'Inca Roads' to illustrate the confluence of a variety of influences To undertake the analysis, and contribute to the lack of available scores of Zappa's work, a full transcription of 'Inca Roads' was undertaken to create a detailed study score which includes full parts for; lead vocals; backing vocals; flute; marimba; vibraphone; electric guitar; two synthesizers; Rhodes piano; bass guitar; timpani; percussion; and drum kit. This full score is included in the appendix to the thesis.