

# Ten Vaulternative Years

[FG aka PIBKOAPSI]

[Rome, Italy, December 12, 2012]

While US and the world had been facing a perverse number of republican presidents in a row, in ten years from the dawning of the Vaulternative label on August 16th, 2002, ZFT has produced a catalogue worth of 19 titles, that includes also some DTS items. A great feat! FZ addicted around the globe can try to be satisfied (actually, they are never fully satisfied with the catalogue, that's why they are addicted!), also considering that between 1994 and 2001 ZFT issued the last FZ fully produced projects. **Trance-fusion** and **Dance Me This**, both published in 2001, closed the Zappa opus, i.e. the 69 albums and a bunch of old singles conceived, arranged, edited, mixed and produced by the composer. The other 21 titled issued (14 by Vaulternative and 5 by DTS, plus **Frank Zappa Plays the Music of Frank Zappa, a Memorial Tribute** and **Everything is Healing Nicely**) have to be considered differently, since they lack one or more of the phases that constitutes the creative process followed by Frank Zappa (special case of course for the 5.1 versions of **OS** and **A(')**). Though, they are precious to enjoy, reconstruct and study the career of the composer, and most of them are completely pleasurable even by a person not so addicted like me! Hopefully more is on his way!

Let's cruise with these 19 albums then, and try to briefly consider each and every one of them with the eye of History!

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## FZ:OZ

(VR 2002-1, August 16, 2002, 2 CDs)

June 25, 1973, Hordern Pavillion, Sydney, Australia. Great show, great n.1 for Vaulternative, great delegate of the February - September 1973 line-up, barely known (only a few officially released bits) even though this very show has been heavily bootlegged. Mainly an instrumental project, the missing link between the wazoo ensembles and the well known October 1973 - December 1974 era with Napoleon Murphy Brock as front singing-blowing-dancing man. Jean-Luc Ponty and Ian Underwood were in the band for their last tour with FZ, and there was a lot of room for them to improvise. Furthermore, the program includes some items you can't miss. First of all *Farther Oblivion*, an unreleased settlement consisting of parts of *Greggery Peccary* (*Steno Pool* / *This is Big Swifty* / *Any Gimmick or Gizmo* / *Is your Wife Snoring?* / *We Have Got the Little Answers* / *Invention of the Calendar*), *Be-Bop Tango* and *Cucamonga*, one of the most eloquent revelations of the Conceptual Continuity in the Project/Object (see also VR2010-2 below). Finally, you can't also miss *Yellow Snow Suite* and a *swank version of Inca Roads*. A perfect starter to me!

## Oh, Atlantis!

(VR 2003-1, February 4, 2003, 2 CDs)

December 11, 1980, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica, California.

The fall 1980 tour is a special one: a few months of a link between the end of the seventies, represented by Colaiuta, and the beginning of eighties, represented by the youngest Vai. The music was tight and tense, the performances precise, the US audience remarkably enthusiastic. This is the end of a short tour, this is Zappa and *Soup and Old Clothes* (via *The Illinois Enema Bandit*) at home. I need more fall 1980 music!

## Spiffy Teenage Boogies

(VR 2003-2, November 8, 2003, 2 CDs)

May 24, 1969, Rockpile, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

We were longing for it, we had been hardly living without! The MOI at their best right before the end of their too short trip in a fantastic show, quite famous between tape traders, now in the magnificence of the real sixties live Canadian stereo. This sonic object has an essential role to reveal what was the MOI live act like. FZ somehow concealed this all through his editing scissors. He used a lot of this '69 vintage material in his albums but never full length (see **YCDTOSA 5** 1969 recordingz). This is a perfect chance to discover the MOI live project listening to a few rare never before issued gems, like the opening number, aka *Interlude* between tape traders (FZ introduces it as *Teenage Overture*, saying that "probably won't be out on record for another 5 or 6 months"!).

## Time is of Affliction

(VR 2004-1, April 6, 2004, 2 CDs)

September 15, 1972, Deutschlandhalle, Berlin, Germany.

Eight dates of a wheelchair sort of a tour, 20 musicians on stage, no official marks in the FZ opus, of course one of the best kept FZ secrets for us zappaphiles. One should say "since this material never found his way through any album, there must be something wrong in these performances for the FZ standard", another one (like me) says "never mind, I know the stuff, it's gorgeous and jazzy, and it smells rightfully funny, also, I know your point is right, that's way I won't entirely consider it like a FZ album, but one must say the same of all the other Vaulternative titles, however I'm interested into them all for one hundred reasons I don't need to explain now". Great highlight: the first appearance for *The Adventures of Greggery Peccary*, tough in a reduced arrangement if compared with the FZ approved one.

## Raw Unbridledness

(DTS 1125, January 15, 2005, 2 DVDs)

December 8/9/10, 1973, The Roxy, Los Angeles, California.

If you had a time machine when and where would you spend a week? I for one only knew it would be on December, but I couldn't decide if would be LA or NYC, '74 or '76. Thanks to this amazing audiovisual object, now I know I would decide for NYC! It would be a suffered decision, but at least as far as LA I may go in heavy video rotation! The Roxy performances, 4 hours uncut, mixed by FZ in 1987, or so they say.

## FZ:OZ Some More

(VR 2005-1, August 24, 2005, 2 CDs)

January 20, 1976, Hordern Pavilion, Sydney, Australia. Upside down again for another tour that rarely found his way through the Zappa output macrostructure, with the enormous exceptions of landmarks like the Osaka captured *Black Napkins* and the *Hands with a Hammer/Zoot Allures* dynamic duo. Zappa enjoyed a lot to interplay with Skinny Ted, but he was not probably entirely satisfied with this group. So pros: explore for the first hi-Australian-fi time this obscure small band, and enjoy the Zappa - Bozzio discourse. Then cons: this music often lacks something, your belly won't feel filled like after listening to **FZ:OZ**, the '73 take. Anyway it fully deserves to be heard at least to know what was going on live in the **Zoot Allures** era.

### QuAUDIOPHILIAc

(DTS 1205, February 26, 2006, 1 DVD-A)

Various studio and live quad documents 1970-1978, program and a few editing by Dweezil. Beautiful, surprising and controversial, are three of the more recurrent adjectives that have been used by listeners everywhere for this first multi-channel FZ audio object. Zappa did some multi-channel mixes throughout his career, this works deserve to be published, the album contains thrilling material (*Chunga Basement* with a great Zappa-Underwood interplay), some interesting mix (*Wild Love* with his high reverberated vocal tracks that reminds the *Doreen* mix included in the never published **Crush All Boxes**), but a few questions arise: if the Royce Hall shows (September 1975) are in this shape, why don't we listen to the entire unpublished set? Why did you use this risky **Läther** type segues (everybody feels it sounds like an high end bootleg)? Now that we are into a quad world, what ever happened to the multi-channel mix of *N-Lite* aired in the halls during the **Yellow Shark** shows?

### Joe's Corsage

(VR 2006-1, September 18, 2006, 1 CD)

Various studio and live ca. 1965, some of them mixed in 1989 by FZ and Bob Stone (for some kind of **Lost Episodes** project?).

ZFT goes further with another nuggets project, and here is the MOI in his proto - but ready to go - aesthetic. This is 1965, when they used to go back and forth from rhythm & blues to their early original repertoire. Plus, we have a chance to hear some FZ interview excerpts from the era, and see how already clear was the FZ analysis of the music business. A very enjoyable album with a program never heard before even by the most obnoxious bootleggers! The liner notes inform us that **Joe** is a series.

### Little Imaginary Dots

(VR 2007-1, February 21, 2007, 2 CDs)

October 31, 1972, Capitol Theatre, Passaic, New Jersey.

Nuggets are a lot of fun, but full live reports such this is an incredible amount of fun, especially when the wazoo world is back, here in his petit 10-musicians group incarnation. FZ addicted are hungry of this 1972 material, after a long time of affliction, and this title is a second blessed relief. And it's Halloween! The program includes three of the most chased unreleased FZ compositions: *Imaginary Deseases*, *Little Dots* and *Rollo* (also revealed in **QuAUDIOPHILIAc** in a very different 1975 settlement, here we have an unreleased intro also). There's a lot of great band improvisation on these pieces, and the written themes are an absolute must! Also, there's a lot of great

arrangements of well known stuff like a fantastic proto *Don't You Ever Wash That Thing?*.

### Joe's DeXenoSynChronage (or The Ampex Solos)

(VR 2007-2, September 1, 2007, 1 CD)

February and March 1979, various European dates.

This is the kind of anal retentive project that we have ever dreamed that ZFT would design. A gigantic praise to the vaultmaister! The subtitle came from a nick, flourished during the **Joe's Garage** sessions, given to the guitar solos used in the mix, all of them Feb / Mar 1979 live and xenosynchronized with the studio tracks. Here, in their full original splendour, we at last have the chance to listen to the songs that include all the **Joe** solos, with the one and only exception of *Watermelon*. An honoured mention to the March 31 *Outside Now* (Munich, Germany) that gave its guitar solo to **Joe's Outside Now**, and that here includes also a brief bass solo and a long keyboard improvisation. Now we know better how creative was the xenochronization process.

### Joe's Checkage

#### (or The Best Soundchecks you Never Heard in your Life)

(VR 2008-1, April 24, 2008, 1 CD)

Various 1988 dates.

Oh anal retentiveness! 2007 and 2008 will be remembered as the years when and where Joe decided to give fulfilment to the most obsessed between us! This Philadelphia *Sleep Dirt* / *Black Napkins* rendition (that dates back in late 1975) deserved light, and it would be a real shame if episodes like this *Girl of Ipanema* (from Philadelphia again) would not reach the public, the arrangement moves puzzlingly between harmony and dissonance, a real gem. And the guitar loops (the Philly one includes *Ipanema!*) connecting all the songs in the program, would you miss them?

### Halloween

(DTS 1401, October 31, 2008, 1 DVD-A)

October 27-31, 1978, The Palladium, NYC, NY.

Includes the following video clips: *Suicide Chump* (October 13, 1978, Capitol Theatre, Passaic, NJ), *Dancin' Fool* (October 21, 1978, Saturday Night Live, NYC, NY).

30 years anniversary for the 1978 Halloween monstro-week, and we have a second multi-channel project, mixed in 5.1 by Joe Chiccarelli. A must have, even if some "part-time theatrical criticizer" claimed that the program would have included different material from those two basses and a very noisy audience days. To me is a very good one, and *Ancient Armaments* was too scantily represented before in its old style 7 inches vinyl objectification.

### A Zappa Affair

(VR 2009-1, March 1, 2009, 1 CD)

June 16, 1984, Zellerbach Auditorium, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kent Nagano.

Even if FZ was not fully satisfied with this performance (to Society Pages USA #2, 1990: "they're playing them better than the LSO, faster, more accurately, but all in all, there's just not enough time or enough money to get everything nailed down to a really perfect"), these recordings are of great interest, not only because provide the only known performance of

the orchestral *Sinister Footwear*, but also because this is one of the very few Zappa controlled orchestral project.

### Overnite Sensation

(DTS 1487, November 21, 2009, 1 DVD-A)

Quadrasonic desperation! Would you prefer to buy any FZ official title in a deluxe 5.1 version, or a complete unreleased MOI/Mothers/FZ live show?

### The Fillmore East Prequel

(VR2010-1, February 10, 2010, 2 CDs)

May 9, 1970, Fillmore East, NYC, NY.

This is a rare, short-lived ensemble, the missing link between the MOI disbanded the year before, and the so called *vaudeville band* to be formed shortly thereafter. FZ built up this group after the **Hot Rats** project that gave its best results in studio. To go on stage again, he probably wanted a band larger than the small *hot rats band* (February and March 1970). So this group, the same that six days later performed in LA with Zubin Mehta and the LA Philharmonic for a very important concert (the **200 Motels** premiere), that survived only in bad audience recordings. In this live act past (Collins, Mundi, Motorhead, the *Tiny Sick Tears* medley) and future (Dumbar, Simmons, *Wonderful Wino*) coexist in a group that was going to bring in Flo & Eddie very soon. Also thanks to Ian Underwood and Don Preston, some highlights: *King Kong* that includes *Igor's Boogie*, *LHIUTI* and *Holiday in Berlin* from the just printed **BWS**. One year later (**Fillmore East, June 1971**) they will be sounding differently.

### Conceptual Moe vs Chromium-Plated Proto Sy

(VR2010-2, July 29, 2010, 3 CDs)

September 17, 1978, Fox Theatre, Atlanta, GA.

Project/Object, Conceptual Continuity. Have you ever tried to explain that P/O "contains plans and nonplans"? Have you ever subsequently asked to "Imagine the head of a pin. On the head

of this pin is an amazingly detailed illustration of some sort" and then to "imagine this pin is not a pin... it's a musical note with a corresponding physical action". It is not so easy. But these recordings here may help. *Sy Borg* and *Moe's Vacation* reveal plans. *Little House I Used to Live In* and *Pound for a Brown* are "precisely calculated event-structures designed to accommodate the mechanics of fate" ("nopplans"), and disclose details in term of "the conceptual continuity of the group's output macrostructure", if you think to where they came from. There "always has been, a conscious control of thematic and structural elements flowing through each album, live performance, and interview". It's almost 20 years now that the "output macrostructure" had an abrupt halt. September 1978 was right in the middle (1964-1993), from there you can see a lot: **Joe's Garage** and its ikewilliness (Ike is here to stay for ten years), the writings of orchestral works (*Moe*), the MOI (*Uncle Meat* is here too), the dawning of **Tinseltown Rebellion** and **YAWYI** (*Easy Meat*, *Bamboozled*, *The Meek*, *Suicide Chump*, *Conehead*). Don't see it like an anthology, it was work in progress connected back and forward, with 1978 eyebrows. "SOMEBODY IN THAT AUDIENCE OUT THERE KNOWS WHAT WE'RE DOING, AND THAT PERSON IS GETTING OFF ON IT BEYOND HIS/HER WILDEST COMPREHENSIONS." [Quoted text from 'INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL', *Circular*, vol. 3, number 29, September 20, 1971].

### Apostrophe (')

(DTS 1523, August 2, 2011, 1 DVD-A)

A quad excentrifugal forz kept me, poor insignificant bi-dimensional kind of a putrid stereophonic insect (PIBKOAPSI), away from it.

### Claremont Hardcore Fury

(VR2011-2, October 20, 2011)

April 11, 1975, Bridges Auditorium, Pomona College, Claremont, CA.

For those of us who think that we did not have enough bongo fury, here is a chance. This is the first date of the Zappa/Beefheart/Mothers spring 1975 tour. The Captain is back, and he and FZ are at home to start off a new thing, and you can feel the thrill. Also, this is the first date for Terry Bozzio, already at ease with FZ soloing, and playing *Echidna/Wash That Thing* for this 2 months tour only. The program includes a very rare live performance of *Orange Claw Hammer* (from **Trout Mask Replica**), and two unreleased Zappa songs: *Velvet Sunrise* and *Portuguese Lunar Landing*. The latter seems to be mysteriously reappeared during the 1981 rehearsals, but never faced a FZ produced album. However, it deserves a place somewhere to further go deep into the Frank Zappa aesthetic of monsters.

### Joe's Damage

(VR 2012-1, May 15, 2012, 1 CD)

Joe's saga explores wazoo rehearsals, not that much music to enjoy, rather a chance to experience the rehearsal process. The voice of FZ closes the album: "I'll tell you what the story is on the recording of this material. I don't want to take it into the studio until you can play all that stuff from memory and it feels natural to do the stuff. That's the reason I'm going about it this way rather than just lay charts in front of everybody . . .". And before this excerpt, one of the few almost complete music episodes of the album: *Another Whole Melodic Section*. That is the obscure *Interlude* that in 1969 Zappa presented as to be published soon (see **Spiffy Teenage Boogies**)! Quite weak, if you think at it as a FZ album, however, after 10 years of unleashed live acts and succulent nuggets, it may be worthwhile listening to rehearsals too (especially when you know that the real thing will be back soon!). ☐