

Zappa's newest; a minor success

by John Wadsworth
Special Music Correspondent

Frank Zappa—Apostrophe (Discreet)

1974 has been a generally unproductive year for a number of outstanding artists. It seems that the output has been of a relaxed tone—a manifestation of a lesser desire to maintain a strong character of originality.

Lou Reed's *Rock 'n Roll Animal* is an enjoyable but inferior sequel to his previous album, *Berlin*. Captain Beefheart's *Unconditionally Guaranteed* holds the same stature in regard to the genius of *Clear Spot*. And of like character is Frank Zappa's *Apostrophe*.

This review appears several weeks after *Apostrophe's* release because this album did not excite me enough to elicit an immediate reaction.

Having digested Zappa's brilliant previous album *Ovenite Sensation*, I was awaiting the usual Zappa display of explosive originality—his usual emergence from other's, as well as his own, worn patterns. But *Apostrophe* is not of such intensity. It is but a weak continuation of *Ovenite Sensation's* comic format, lacking its consistency and unaffectedness.

It is possible that Zappa, in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Mothers, wanted to produce an album that would be reflective rather than directive. If this is his intention, *Apostrophe* is a mild success.

Side one consists of a four-part comic saga of Nanook of the Eskimo. The songs make up a definite example of Zappa's pervasive obsession with comedy. Its structure and substance bring to mind *Billy the Mountain* from another disappointing album, *Just Another Band From L.A.* But these songs are superior due to Zappa's wider usage of rhythm and his improved lyrical eccentricity. The last song on the side, *Cosmik Debris*, echoes Zappa's diverse history of social protest found mainly in his earliest albums, *Freak Out*, *Absolutely Free* and *We're Only In It For The Money*. In its totality, it is the outstanding song of the album.

Side two leans more toward Zappa's jazz orientation. *Excetrifugal Forz* and *Apostrophe* clearly, but weakly, point to the segments of Zappa's evolution that emphasized astounding musicianship rather than lyric content—*Uncle Meat*, *Burnt*

Weeny Sandwich, *Hot Rats*, *The Grand Wazoo* and *Waka Jawaka*. Again, as is the rest of the album, these are entertaining tracks. But in light of Zappa's past, they lack significance. *Uncle Remus* provides a much needed interlude between the frenetic *Apostrophe* and the dragging finale of the album, *Stink-Foot*. While *Cosmik Debris* is the outstanding, *Uncle Remus* is *Apostrophe's* most refreshing song.

The success of *Apostrophe* in record sales exposes a sad cancer in a realm of music that once stood alone as the hope for non-commercial creativity. Reed, Beefheart and Zappa have, up to now, experienced, at the most, a mild success on the charts.

Berlin, *Clear Spot* and *Ovenite Sensation* were all uncreative but were lauded by those who had followed these artists' careers from their onset. But such a loyal faction is small and apparently considered worthless by record companies in want of strong monetary showings. Hence, the appearance of albums like these artists' most recent.

Perhaps it is a wise move to surrender, just once, one's creative striving, or to freeze it until the mass can comprehend what one has been trying to convey. Perhaps this is one of the supposed duties of the artist to his audience—to whatever the audience is or is thought to be.

Perhaps, with so many people listening to these artists for the first time, their former albums will receive a renewed attention and much belated respect.

Perhaps this process will leave the artist free once again to continue his once characteristic devotion to unbridled creation. For these reasons Zappa's next album will be an important one.

The word apostrophe comes from a root whose meaning is "the act of turning away." I hope that the album portends such a movement from the wearied substance of Zappa's latest work. I hope that Zappa's movement will be as unpredictable as the majority of his changes were before *Apostrophe*.

I recommend *Apostrophe*, the most accessible of Frank Zappa's albums, to anyone new to his music in the hope that in so doing they will be stimulated to expose themselves to his earlier and better material.

The value and validity of *Apostrophe* rest in its ability to work this process—to function as a magnetic summary that signals an enlivened, unconditional turn toward far distant vistas.

by Harvey Elliott
Film Critic

All These Women—A 1964 Ingmar Bergman comedy largely ignored because it was such a departure from his by-then standard soul searching dramas. Critics accused him of being trivial, ignoring the fact that Bergman was revisiting familiar territory—the theatrical, romantic little night music of 1955's *Smiles of a Summer Night*—already charted before *The Seventh Seal* and succeeding profundities. The script isn't always inspired, according to Films & Filming, but Bergman and his photographer Sven Nykvist experiment with color...quite remarkably. (Carolina Union Free Flick on Sunday, 8:30, The Great Hall.)

American Graffiti—An anti-nostalgia movie: the first film in a long time to treat a bygone year with honesty instead of gloss. The script is as banal as we were in the early 60's, and consistently fascinating. Could our Saturday nights really have been that pointless, that boring? Did we really agonize so over our teenage crises?

One of the best films of last year, with a cast of inspired actors who should immediately go out and make more films, but not about the 50's or 60's. Ron Howard has already made his mistake. Filmed in Northern California in 29 days by George Lucas. Lit in neon. (Playing all week at Plaza 1.)

Chariots of the Gods?—Erich von Daeiken's theory is that prehistoric extraterrestrial visitors might have taught people in Egypt, Mexico, South America and the Middle East to build their pyramids,

temples, cities and other wonders. The result is this three-year-old German film which, according to *The New York Times*, is a placid postcard, a picturesque but unconvincing travelogue that sometimes captivates the eye but rarely the mind...Unfortunately, until science verifies the author's and the film's assumptions and findings, *Chariots of the Gods?* merely rolls through a succession of pleasantly exotic places while posing a slew of unanswered questions. (Starts Wednesday, at the Varsity.)

Dirty Mary Crazy Larry—A descendent of *Vanishing Point*, this new movie stars Peter Fonda and Susan George. Variety calls it a vehicular orgy with little narrative or characterization built around an automotive escape from the law. The accent, needless to say, is on the action, as George, Fonda and Adam Roarke steal \$150,000 (to buy a competition sports car) and career around rural California with...demonic Vic Morrow in pursuit. (Playing all week at Plaza 3.)

Duck Soup—The last pure, uncluttered Marx Brothers film. Groucho plays Rulus T. Firefly, who has been chosen President of Fredonia. Harpo and Chico are double agents, for Firefly and for Trentino, a rival dictator. *Duck Soup* contains one of the classic scenes in Marxian history: the mirror scene with Groucho and Harpo (dressed as Groucho).

King of Hearts—A little, wistful film starring Alan Bates as ruler of a make-believe land. The movie has had phenomenal popularity in college communities and virtually none anywhere else. A true cult film, *King of Hearts*

has played in some college towns for months on end, and one theatre (in Boston? or perhaps in Berkeley?) has shown the movie continuously for over a year. Directed by Philippe de Broca, and originally released in 1967. (Wednesday and Thursday at the Carolinas.)

Laura—Gene Tierney, Clifton Webb and Dana Andrews star in Otto Preminger's 1944 film, his first. Laura is dead, or is she? Andrews tries to piece together the mystery, and Webb offers wry commentary as a cynical columnist. Judith Anderson and Vincent Price are featured, and this movie proves that the early Preminger was much more fascinating than the present Preminger. (Carolina Union Free Flick, Thursday at 8:30 at the Great Hall.)

Lord of the Flies—British stage-screen director Peter Brook directed this 1964 version of the William Golding novel. *Man* (or rather, *Boy*) returns to savagery after a plane crash (and possible nuclear war?) on a tropic island. The children in the film are all amateurs, and Peter Cowie notes that the film's overall impact is blurred, however, by their hesitant performances, but he calls the film arresting and sincere...a faithful rendering of what may be recognized as one of the great novels of our time. (Late show tonight and Saturday, at the Carolina.)

Monkey Business—This 1931 Marx Brothers film is about four stowaways who open the film by popping out of four barrels of kipped herring, and includes such gems as a scene with a customs inspector in which all four Marxes try to enter America on Maurice

Chavaller's passport, and another in which Harpo performs in a Punch and Judy show. (Sunday through Tuesday, on a double bill with *Duck Soup*, at the Varsity.)

The Paper Chase—Director James Bridges wanted James Mason to play the role of an autocratic law professor in this generally intelligent story of the first year of Law School. Luckily, Mason wasn't available and he called on his old friend John Houseman, head of Juilliard's drama department and former co-producer with Orson Welles in the WPA days. Houseman's performance is the beacon around which the film is molded, and he deserved his Oscar. (Now playing through Saturday, at the Varsity.)

The Sting—An overrated entertainment which delivers a pretty funny punchline to over two hours of set-up. Certainly not the Best Picture of the Year; and hasn't everybody seen it already? (Playing all week, at Plaza 2.)

Thoroughly Modern Millie—A fairly fun musical with Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore (pre-liberation) and Carol Channing, doing an unbelievable rendition of George Gershwin's *Do It Again* as she is shot out of a cannon. Gatsby meets Tin Pan Alley, with a lot of fun songs. (Carolina Union Free Flick, Tuesday at 8:30, Great Hall.)

Walking Tall—The (somewhat) true-life story of Tennessee sheriff Buford Pusser as he fights evil and corruption. (What else could he do with a name like that?) Pauline Kael comments that, after seeing this violent, powerful audience-pleaser, she knows how it feels to be under the spell of a demagogue. (Playing through Tuesday, at the Carolina.)

Current Taster's Choice

A tale from rabbit country

by Jim Marsh
Feature Writer

Watership Down, by Richard Adams; Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., New York; 426 pages; \$6.95.

Watership Down is a first effort on the part of Richard Adams, an Englishman who recently resigned a governmental position with the Department of the Environment to devote his full energies to his writing. What he has produced in this novel amounts to a small scale epic, a carefully constructed fantasy which shows not only a vivid imagination but a simplistically stylized form of writing.

But let the prospective reader be warned: this is a tale about rabbits. Not the same class as Peter or Brier, to be sure; but despite the sophistication of his characterizations and their superior stature, they are rabbits nonetheless. So if you find it difficult to be amused by happenings in a lesser society or if you don't particularly care for common flora and fauna, it would be wise to look elsewhere for entertainment.

Watership Down is a geographic area, a meadow near Newbury, England. It is here that a small and hardy band of rabbits have migrated, under the pressure of an ominous fear from one of their kind. The events leading up to their departure and their subsequent journey to find a suitable home, or warren, smacks faintly of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Trilogy of the Ring*; the dissention, the dangers, the interspersed rabbit-lore, and the rabbit intrigue resemble a foreshortened tale not unlike that of the well-known *Hobbits*. Similarly, the rabbits engage in warfare against a host of adversaries ranging from rats to foxes to cats to hawks to dogs and ultimately to, you guessed it, other rabbits. The pace is lively indeed, this being a work that has a conciseness and a directness about it.

With considerable action, this novel rates very well. But coming from an author who has both a knowledge and enthusiasm about the more common forms of wildlife, it comes off being better than a casual peruser might imagine. By injecting some of the more fundamental element of humanity into the behavior of these lapine pioneers, Adams creates a world of almost totally believable rabbitdom. As might be expected then, there reside within these pages commendable and despicable little characters that are vivid enough to lull one right out to a world of inflation, violence, and human nastiness and project one into a fascinating atmosphere of

sublime rabbitry.

Prefixing every one of the novel's many short chapters is a quotation from such diverse sources as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Joel Chandler Harris, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Thomas Hardy, Dylan Thomas, Plato and on and on. Usually pertinent, these act as previews of coming action and sometimes didacticism of action past. There seems to be an overall hint at *Watership Down* being something of a rough and brief human metaphor, but there is too little in the way of serious parallel to make such a metaphor either meaningful or effective. An overall pretentiousness results which might tend to be slightly offensive to some readers.

Yet this work is unique. Aside from being colorful by virtue of its theme and lingual artistry, the tale itself lies in that same gray zone as *Alice in Wonderland* or *Wind in the Willows*. It's not really a children's story at all, yet it maintains a kind of wonder and purity uncommon in most novels turned out these days.

This is not to say that there are not inklings to adult harshness within. These rabbits live with death and maiming and fear; but Adams conveys the whole historical and natural cycle with unusual grace and clarity. He adds to this just the tasteful amount of rabbit antic, frolic, and trickery; there is little that could be considered trite here.

Not by chance, this book is a bestseller; perhaps for some that may be an inducement to lend their attention. Still, it's not for just anyone. One is inclined to take it more seriously than the author probably intended; despite the various heroic, Christian and tragic parallels, it is too superficial to be considered intellectually provoking or highly philosophical. It ought to be taken in the proper context, as a refreshing and vaguely symbolic tale of meadowland wildness and struggle.

Watership Down is no more easily discussed than Tolkien's *Trilogy*; although it is not as complex or lengthy, it likewise loses something in the translation. For this reason it will probably retain a mystery and obscurity for those never get around to starting it. Of those who initially partake of its contents, perhaps two-thirds will finish.

This novel may well be one of the cult or fad novels of this decade. But like others of this type, it ought not to be taken too seriously; after all, it is about rabbits. But, then again, you'll never look at a rabbit the same way.



Photo by Ric Carter

Frank Zappa

Lowest Rates in the area! Why drive or Pay More? Visit...

CAROLINA UNION BOWLING LANES

Ground Level-Student Union Building

Monday-Friday 10 a.m.-11 p.m.
Sunday 5:30-11 p.m.

Summer Leagues Forming—Bowling Classes Available
AMF & Brunswick Equipment Sold



Love someone.

YOUR CHOICE \$11.95

- Choose from a wide assortment including:
- Colored or clear dials
 - Digital dials
 - Colored or clear cases
 - Kaleidoscope dials
 - Colored or clear bands
 - Modern styling

ALL WATCHES ARE SWISS MADE.

LUCITE WATCHES
CONTEMPORARY TIMEPIECES
BY CHATEAU

IN CHAPEL HILL SHOP AT GORDON'S
UNIVERSITY MALL

S. Estes Drive
Shop Gordon's Coast to Coast

Gordon's JEWELERS

tijuana fats' ANTI-INFLATION SPECIAL!

ANY TACO OR ENCHILADA DINNER

with Coffee or Tea

5-6 PM ★ Mon.-Thurs.

2.49

403 W. Rosemary St.—Great Mexican Food

In the 1971 General Assembly, CARL SMITH Voted For:

1. Lowering voting age to 18.
2. Abolition of capital punishment
3. Liberalizing ABORTION LAWS.
4. Environmental protection legislation
5. Full support of bills affecting UNC-CH.

In the coming session, CARL SMITH Will Support:

1. Insurance based on driving records rather than age or sex.
2. Equal Rights Amendment
3. Repeal of Regressive Taxes
4. Major consumer legislation
5. No Fault Insurance

A VOTE FOR CARL SMITH IS A VOTE FOR THE CONSUMER
Support Carl Smith
For North Carolina Senate
Primary Run-Off Tuesday, June 4, 1974