

Frank Zappa - Finer Moments (2012)

Written by bluesever

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CD1: 01. Intro - 1:20 02. Sleazette - 3:33 03. Mozart Piano Sonata In Bb - 6:21 04. The Walking Zombie Music - 3:23 05. The Old Curiosity Shoppe - 7:07 06. You Never Know Who Your Friends Are - 2:20 07. Uncle Rhabus - 17:45 CD2: 01. Music From The Big Squeeze - 0:42 02. Enigmas 1 Thru 5 - 8:15 03. Pumped And Waxed - 4:19 04. There Is No Heaven From Where Slogans Go To Die - 4:37 05. Squeeze It Squeeze It Squeeze It - 3:17 06. The Subcutaneous Peril - 19:41

Jimmy Carl Black Drums Aynsley Dunbar Drums Roy Estrada Bass, Vocals Bunk Gardner Sax (Tenor), Woodwind Buzz Gardner Trumpet Lowell George Guitar Bob Harris Keyboards Howard Kaylan Cowbell, Tambourine Jim Pons Bass Don Preston Keyboards, Mini Moog Dave Samuels Vibraphone Motorhead Sherwood Sax (Baritone) Art Tripp Percussion Arthur Dyer Tripp III Drums, Percussion Ian Underwood Clarinet, Keyboards, Piano, Sax (Alto), Woodwind Mark Volman Cowbell, Tambourine Frank Zappa Conductor, Guitar, Instrumentation, Title, Vocals

Finer Moments is a curious but mostly excellent compilation of (mostly) instrumental odds and ends put together by FZ in 1972 that went (mostly) unreleased until 2012. Disc one concentrates on the 1968-1969 Mothers. The first four tracks are from a 1969 Royal Albert Hall show that was partially documented in the film Uncle Meat. "Sleazette" is a great guitar solo, but the Mozart piece loses quite a bit without the "ballet" visuals. "The Wailing Zombie Music" sounds part-composed/part-conducted improvisation. "The Old Curiosity Shoppe" is a nice jam from 1971 featuring some nice wah-wah alto sax from Ian Underwood and wicked soloing from FZ. This also might be the first time Zappa excerpted the solo portion of a tune and retitled it (as he did for nearly every track on the Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar series). In this case, it's probably "Little House I Used to Live In." "Uncle Rhabus" is another one of these, this time using the solos from "King Kong" at the Ark in Boston in 1968 (previously released as part of Beat the Boots!, Vol. 2).

It doesn't say it in the liner notes, but "Music from the Big Squeeze" is actually the soundtrack to

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the Luden's cough drop commercial that won Frank a Clio award. "Enigmas 1-5" is a cool series of percussion duets with FZ and Art Tripp (both of whom were very well-versed in orchestral percussion). "Pumped and Waxed" shifts gears considerably. It's a really cool keyboard/synth piece that Zappa did in his basement studio that could easily be the soundtrack for a '50s sci-fi B-movie. Then it's back to the 1969 band, during Lowell George's brief stint in the Mothers. "There Is No Heaven Where Slogans Go to Die" is a spooky, improv-sounding piece with Dave Samuels guesting on vibes while "Squeeze It, Squeeze It, Squeeze It" is Roy Estrada's laughing/hysterics/"Oh God!" schtick (this track was also previously released on the Mystery Disc). "The Subcutaneous Peril" is from 1971 and ends the set on a high note. It also sounds like the vamp from "Little House I Used to Live In" but Don Preston in place of Bob Harris gives it a very different flavor.

Finer Moments has some amazing moments, some that are more curious/interesting and a couple that are sub-par for one reason or another. It's also an interesting glimpse of Zappa's creative process, as this was the first time he used parts of existing compositions as "new" compositions as well as the first time he assembled an album from such disparate sources, but ultimately chose to not release it. It's a minor quibble (and hard to go against Frank's choices) but the elimination of the previously released "Squeeze It, Squeeze It, Squeeze It" would have allowed this set to be released as a single disc. Even so, there's enough great material to please a hardcore fan. But if you're not a hardcore fan, there are better places to start. ---Sean Westergaard, AllMusic Review

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