

Frank Zappa

Interview by Jerry Hopkins - *Rolling Stone*, 1968 July
The Rolling Stone Interviews Vol. I, 1968

J. H.: Are there any groups in the business you feel have any legitimacy?

F.Z.: Yes. I like the Chrysalis. **Jimi Hendrix**. The Cream. Captain Beefheart. Traffic. And not necessarily in that order.

Frank Zaps in for a fine concert

By Bob Fox - The San Francisco Phoenix,
December 22, 1972

B. F.: Do you think that audiences are going to ultimately come to it even if they don't come to it, say the first or second time?

F. Z.: Well, let's suppose I do it and they don't come to it. But let's suppose somebody that they like better does it because they heard us do it, and they do it -- they'll go to it. If Grand Funk Railroad started playing serial music, they'd love it.

B. F.: Do you think they would?

F. Z.: Sure. They'd be...

B. F.: (interrupts) You couldn't dance to it.

F. Z.: How do you know? All you got to do is keep a strong backbeat to it, it doesn't make too much difference what the pitches are. As a matter of fact, you start defining terms like serial or atonal and things like that, well - feedback is atonal and **Jimi Hendrix** used to do that up the ass, so what's the difference? He had the right showmanship to present with that and going into a serial framework might be just another logical extension.

One Size Fits All Interview

By Steve Rosen - *Guitar Player Magazine*, Jan. 1977

Are you still using the SG pictured on the cover of the "live" Roxy & Elsewhere album?

No, I have another SG that I'm using. The one that's on the Roxy cover has since been thoroughly injured by an airline company, they beat the hell out of it. They cracked the neck, and the most recent time it came back from Europe the binding was off the fretboard. I had the neck repaired, but it's never been the same; it flexes so much that it's hard to keep in tune, so I hardly use it anymore. But one time we were working down in Phoenix, and this guy came to the dressing room after the show with this guitar he'd built and wanted to sell. He had copied a Gibson (SG) except he'd added

one more fret so it went up to an E, and it had an ebony fingerboard, humbucking pickups, and some inlay, and some real nice woodwork on it. He wanted \$500 for it, and I thought it was a real nice guitar, so I bought it. I had (guitar maker) Rex Bogue do some stuff to it, add a preamp and snazz it up, and that's the one I'm using now. Another one of my Strats is the one **Hendrix** burned at the Miami Pop Festival; it was given to me by this guy who used to be his roadie. I had it hanging on the wall in my basement for years until last year when I gave it to Rex and said, "Put this sucker back together," because it was all tore up. The neck was cracked off, the body was all fired, and the pickups were blistered and bubbled. That's the one that's got the Barcus-Berry in the neck. A lot of people thought I had **Hendrix's** guitar from Monterey, but it was from Miami; the one at Monterey was white and this one is sunburst.

Do you use the vibrato arm on the Stratocaster or the SG?

Well, I used to use it on the SG a little bit, but I took it off because it was too hard to keep the instrument in tune, specifically the one with the soft neck. But I use the vibrato arm quite a bit now on one of the Strats. I don't even have a vibrato arm on the **Hendrix** Strat. You can hear it on Zoot Allures.

What type of wah-wah do you use?

I have a Mu-tron and the Oberheim VCF (voltage control filter). I've got an example of that on this new album (Zoot Allures). I'm starting to use some Echoplex now, which I've generally avoided in the past.

You use the wah-wah a lot in its bass position where it acts as a sort of fuzz boost.

Yeah, I use it for a tone control. Very seldom do I just step on it on the beat like on the old Clapton records where he goes wacka-wacka-wacka, just to tap your foot on it. Usually what I do is shape the notes for phrasing with it, and the motion of the pedal itself is very slight. I try to find one center notch in the thing that's going to emphasize certain harmonics, and ride it right in that area. Because if you put it all the way to the top it's too squeaky, and if you put it all the way back it's too blurred.

Had you heard Clapton or Hendrix using the wah-wah before you started?

As a matter of fact, I think I was one of the first people to use the wah-wah pedal. I'd never even heard of Jimi **Hendrix** at the time I bought mine; I didn't even know who he was. I had used wah-wah on the Clavinet, guitar, and saxophone when we were doing We're Only In It For The Money, and that was just before I met **Hendrix**. He came over and sat in with us at the Garrick Theater that night and was using all the stuff we had onstage. Seems like every time I went to Manny's there'd be some new gizmo that we'd try out, so we were always into the hardware of the rock and roll industry.

Zappa

International Times, March, 1977

Over the last 10 years of rock music has anybody really surprised you like Hendrix for example?

No, **Hendrix** didn't surprise me, but I heard some things that I've liked. Actually I get more surprises listening to a 'Queen' album than I get out of **Jimi Hendrix's** albums.

From the music?

From the production. It's very good production. Some of the things that they're doing mix-wise on these albums are very difficult.

Do you think that it's peculiarly English sound?

I'd say if I heard that album and nobody told me what it was – I'd say it was an English album. I don't know why I'd say that but it has that kind of sound.

Zappa Speaks Up

By Dan Warfield - *The Stars And Stripes*,
September 26, 1978

D.W.: Are you pulling elements from jazz, from classical music, from rock for something like this, or do you divide the categories up when you're working?

F.Z.: The way it works is: The thing that really sets those musical styles apart is not what kind of notes are in it, but what kind of timbre is expressing it. I'll give you an example. You know the **Jimi Hendrix** song "Purple Haze"? Picture it being played by an accordion. Is it still acid rock? You get the idea. The timbre of the instruments playing the line is what makes it sound like jazz. If you take the Bach Two-Part Inventions and have it played by a Fender-Rhodes piano and a rhythm section it could sound rather jazzy.

Shut Up And Play Your Guitar

Interview by John Dalton - *Guitar*, May-June 1979

J. D.: Have you brought many guitars with you?

F. Z.: I've probably got about four or five guitars with me; the Hendrix Strat, which has the world's first triple humbucking pickup on it, another Strat, my normal SG, a new Les Paul Custom with a pre-amp built into it, a 12-string and an Ovation.

Frank Zappa

The interview by John Swenson - *Guitar World*, March 1982

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There were a few as-yet-unreleased songs thrown in for good measure, including one particularly interesting tune called "Returning Again," an ironic criticism of the wholesale regurgitation of late sixties/early seventies rock moves by current groups. The song could also be considered a Jimi Hendrix tribute (Zappa has a painting of Hendrix in his basement studio).

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GW: What was that Jimi Hendrix song?

FZ: That's called "Returning Again."

GW: When did you write that?

FZ: Two or three years ago. It's got some good words to it.

GW: What's that line about the way they play it on the radio?

FZ: "If you listen to the radio and what they play today you can tell right away, all of those assholes really need you. Everybody come back. No one can do it like you used to. If you listen to the radio and what they play today, you can tell right away, all those assholes really need you."

GW: Is that a comment on the fact that the Doors are the second best-selling American group right now?

FZ: No, it is just a comment on the fact that as we head into the Dark Ages again you will hear only ten songs for the rest of your life. And I think a little variety never hurt.

GW: There is also ... you do really like Hendrix obviously?

FZ: Well, yeah. I think that he was really good. Steve loves Hendrix. You know, Steve, he's got tattoos on his body. He's the Stratocaster guy. And I knew Jimi. He came over to my house once. Nice guy. And it's too bad that he met such an early demise.

GW: So there is in a way a kind of tribute to him?

FZ: Of course, it's a tribute to anybody who did anything in rock and roll that set the standards for what people are doing now, and often copying in a bad way. You know, to me the original stuff ... it's just like the original rhythm and blues records. There's nothing like it. A lot of those same things are being re-recorded again and recorded cleaner and nicer and better and whatever, faster. But it's not the same. And it's really not New Wave and it's not improved anything. It's just today's freeze-dried version of the mannerisms of another form of music that already happened.

Frank Zappa

By Steven Rosen - *Record Review*, June 1982

S. R.: Did you ever do any shows with Hendrix?

F. Z.: Yeah, he sat in with us at the Garrick Theater. In fact, he played my hollowbody through a Fender Twin and got feedback out of that. All I know is he was working downstairs at this place. The Cafe Au Go Go, and we invited him to sit in and he came upstairs and I let him use my guitar and he got feedback and went ape. I saw him at the Cafe Au Go Go when he played with us and at a pop festival in Miami where we worked with him. That's when he burned his guitar and I got it about a year-and-a-half later from the guy who used to be one of his roadies, a guy called Howard Parker. We also jammed with him at this little club called The Castaways or something like that in Miami because all the groups who were playing at the festival were staying at this same hotel. And there was a bar and we had a jam session there. Yeah, I think he was good. I enjoyed playing with him. He also came over to the house one time with Buddy Miles and he said, "Hi, this is my friend Buddy" and I said "Great, pleased to meet you Buddy" and Buddy says "Hi, Frank" and sits down on the sofa and nods out. His head went back, his mouth fell open and he was snoring for two hours while I continued to talk with Jimi. You don't play much acoustic guitar? Seldom. I only practice on it. I mean, I like the way it sounds on record but I don't consider myself an acoustic player. I used it on *We're Only In It For The Money* and there's one cut called "Sleep Dirt" on *Studio Tan*. There's a solo on "Stink-foot" where I use an acoustic guitar with a Barcus-Berry on it and that's going to one side and the electric output of the acoustic is going to a Mutron on the right side. A hybrid kind of thing.

Interview #2 from The Frank Zappa Interview Picture Disk

This is the second of 2 Frank Zappa interviews which were transcribed from an imported CD called "The Frank Zappa Interview Picture Disk". It must have been conducted sometime in early to mid 1984.

Interviewer: And the other part of the same article is going to be your thoughts on some of your contemporaries and your people, if you don't mind. People like Chuck Berry?

Frank Zappa: Chuck Berry? Well, I used to like Chuck Berry when I was in High School. Songs like "Havana Mill" and "Wee Wee Hours" which were the flip sides of the hits that he had - the more bluesy things. His main innovation besides that duck walk choreography was the multiple string guitar solos - the lines were harmonizing because he was playing on two strings at once. There was another guitar player who used to do that named Jimmy Nolan who I had a lot of respect for.

Interviewer: B.B King?

Frank Zappa: I don't like B.B. I saw him on television before I went on this tour and he was still blue.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, I've seen him recently and I thought he was amazing. Keith Richard?

Frank Zappa: I don't know anything about Keith Richard.

Interviewer: Jimi Hendrix?

Frank Zappa: I knew **Jimi** and I think that the best thing you could say about Jimi was: there was a person who shouldn't use drugs.

Zappa

By Pete Crowther - *Speakout*, Summer/Autumn, 1986

P. C.: Has a lot of the 'fun' gone out of the music for Mr Zappa?

F. Z.: "The fun hasn't gone out of the music, but the fun has been out of the music *business* for a long time. The trend started in the seventies with the advent of corporate rock – that period of American musical history when the method by which groups were chosen to record was placed in the hands of the accountants and executive types within the industry who had no musical taste and who were signing groups based on a weird type of aesthetics which seems common to accountants. So you got a lot of bland music being recorded."

P. C.: Didn't that sort of approach start in the sixties with The Monkees?

F. Z.: "Yes, but that was a novelty. Also during the sixties you had **Jimi Hendrix**, which was slightly different (laughs). I don't see any equivalent to a **Hendrix** type band working in records today!"

Conversation With FZ

By Alain Chauvat - *Mother People*, #33, 1986

Alain: In an interview from *Guitar Player* you said you played with Jimi Hendrix. In what circumstances you did you play together?

FZ: It was twice. We (the MOI) used to work at a place called the Garrick Theater where we played 2 shows a night, 6 nights a week in a 300 seat theater. This was in 1967 and we were there for about four or five months. And, we used to have people come in and play with us on stage. And one night, working at a club right next door called the Cafe A-Go-Go, we invited him to come and play with us. So he went on stage and played at that event and also, a few months later we were working together at a pop festival in Miami. I guess we were there for about a week and one night, after the daytime events, there was a jam session in a bar of a motel called Castaways. Those were the two times.

Alain: Can we expect some recordings from those sessions?

FZ: There are none.

Father Of Invention

By Rick Davies - *Music Technology*, February 1987

"There's one rule of thumb I use in terms of all compositions, whether it's rock 'n' roll or chamber music. It's that timbre rules. The timbre of the piece is the most important thing people hear. The timbre will tell you how to hear the rest of the data, and the best example of that theory is this: You can take **Jimi Hendrix** playing 'Purple Haze', and take the guitar part. If you listen to the guitar, it's 'Purple Haze'. But if you take exactly that guitar part, note for note, and have it played on an accordion, it's still the same data, but it's not the same information. So the timbre is the thing that tells you what it is you're listening to."

Zappa's Inferno

By Noë Goldwasser – *Guitar World*, April 1987

Was there ever a practitioner of the guitar--- Hendrix, say----that blew you away in terms of being a total original?

One of the most interesting guys on guitar on the planet is Allan Holdsworth. I really respect his playing.

Billy Gibbons is an original. The style that he does, although I know a lot of the blues antecedents that it was derived from, he goes like *that [raises middle finger again]*. You've gotta have *that* in your playing. I thought Hendrix was great. But the very first time I saw him I had the incredible misfortune to be sitting real close to him at the Au Go Go in New York City, and he had a whole stack of Marshalls and I was right in front of it. I was physically ill--I couldn't get out, it was so packed I couldn't escape. And although it was great, I didn't see how anybody could inflict that kind of volume on himself let alone other people. That particular show he ended by taking the guitar and impaling it in the low ceiling of the club. Just walked away and left it squealing.

The Mother of All Interviews

By Don Menn from *A Definitive Tribute to Frank Zappa (early 1992)*

Whatever happened to your Jimi Hendrix Miami guitar?

I gave it to Dweezil.

Is it playable?

Oh, yeah. He had it refurbished. Fender spiffed the thing back up.

Frank Zappa. Interview in Playboy

Playboy - May 2, 1993

Were you involved in other aspects of the counterculture?

In order to be a part of it, you had to buy into the whole drug package. You had to have been experienced, in the **Jimi Hendrix** sense of the word. And all the people I knew who had been experienced were on the cusp of being zombies.

Was it disconcerting that your audiences were high much of the time?

The worst part of it for me was that I really didn't like the smell of marijuana. I had to go into a place that had the purple haze and work for a couple of hours in that. They were entitled to do whatever they wanted, so long as they didn't drive into me under the influence of it.

But you told people drugs were stupid, before Nancy Reagan did.

One of the reasons we weren't rabidly popular at that time was that I said what was on my mind about drugs.

Did you feel like an outsider? It's safe to say that every other major rock star in those days was

Looped. It wasn't just the other musicians but the people in the band. The guys in the band who wished they could do drugs couldn't because it meant unemployment. I was unpopular for it. As for the rock stars, if you've met them, you know that they generally have very little on their minds. I never had any great desire to hang out with them.

Did any of the big acts of the time interest you? How about Dylan, Hendrix, the Stones?

Some of the really good things that **Hendrix** did was the earliest stuff, when he was just ripping and brutal. "Manic Depression" was my favorite **Jimi Hendrix** song. The more experimental it got, the less interesting and the thinner it got. As for Dylan, "Highway 61 Revisited" was really good. Then we got "Blonde on Blonde" and it started to sound like cowboy music, and you know what I think of cowboy music. I liked The Rolling Stones.

Frank Zappa, Unholy Mother

by David Mead - Guitarist, June 1993

The rock guitar influences that are the most common are the '60s icons, players like Clapton and Hendrix ...

"Yes, but when we did *Freak Out!* and *Absolutely Free*, there wasn't any Hendrix. We met Hendrix in the summer of '67; he sat in with us at the Garrick Theatre, so we'd already made those albums before I even knew that he existed. Actually, I think my playing is probably more derived from the folk music records that I heard; middle Eastern music, Indian music, stuff like that.

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How did you come to own your fire-damaged ex-Jimi Hendrix Strat?

"Well, there was this guy named Howard Parker – they called him 'H' – who was Hendrix's roadie, gofer and general assistant. He stayed at our house for a couple of months in the late '60s, and he had this guitar which Hendrix had given to him – I thought it was from the Miami concert. He gave it to me and we had it hanging on the wall as a decoration for years and years, and then I met some guys who were capable of putting guitars back together, so I had it done.

I've used it on a couple of tracks, although I can't remember which ones off-hand. I haven't played it all that often, because unless you're in the right environment and you're standing in exactly the right relationship to the amplifier, it likes to feed back all the time."
