

Notes on “Zappa en Regalia”

In the world of rock music, Frank Zappa was *sui generis*. There was never anyone quite like him before, and there has never been anyone quite like him since.

Influenced equally, at different times, by doo-wop music, hard rock, Varese, Stravinsky, Bartok, R&B and fusion jazz, Zappa was a musical iconoclast, a gadfly who regularly poked a finger in the eye of the establishment, skewered the late '60s countercultural movement as easily as he savaged Republicans, televangelists and the very same record conglomerates that released his music.

He was nothing if not contradictory throughout his career, a misogynist, atheist, borderline (at the very least) racist, equal-opportunity savager of ethnic and religious groups, he nonetheless created some of the most unique and memorable music of the late '60s, '70s and '80s.

He was, in addition, a workaholic, an obsessed perfectionist, a sexual profligate, a cold and aloof spouse and parental figure, and, without question, a musical genius who created a body of work that broke boundaries, gleefully offended everyone (e.g. “Jewish Princess” and “Catholic Girls”) and provided perverse delight for his millions of adoring fans.

This poem attempts, no doubt only with partial success, to capture the paradox that was Zappa.