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Zappa and Jazz: Did it really smell funny, Frank?

Geoff Wills

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Zappa and Jazz: Did it really smell funny, Frank? Geoff Wills
Although Frank Zappa died over 20 years ago, he continues to be regarded as an iconic figure in 20th century culture. In 1973 he famously said 'Jazz is not dead... it just smells funny,' and in this new book Geoff Wills takes a look at Zappa's widely assumed antipathy for the jazz genre. Along the way, he throws up some very interesting facts. Frank Zappa's music has a unique and easily recognisable quality, and it brilliantly synthesizes a wide range of cultural influences. Zappa and Jazz focuses on the influence of jazz on Zappa in an attempt to clarify the often-confusing nature of his relationship with it. Zappa's early years are examined, from his first foray into a recording studio to the formation and progress of his band The Mothers of Invention. There are exhaustive critiques here of the key jazz-related albums Hot Rats, King Kong, The Grand Wazoo and Waka/Jawaka. Along the way, Wills analyses Zappa's music and the wider influences that were crucial in forming his attitudes, not only to jazz but to society in general. The book concludes with a discussion of Zappa's similarity to more orthodox jazz leaders, his legacy and the influence on jazz-related music. Guaranteed to appeal to all Zappa fans who seek new insights into his music, to open-minded jazz listeners and to anyone with an interest in the melting pot of 20th century music.

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