



Bio information: **THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND**

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**FILE UNDER: JAZZ / BIG BAND**

*"...my bandmembers are the greatest and most "loyal to the cause" musicians I could ever hope for. ....  
This album is dedicated to my band. Thanks, folks!" – Ed Palermo, liner notes to Oh No! Not Jazz!*

*"Like Zappa, and Duke Ellington before, Palermo's main instrument is his band. And with him at the helm is manages to capture perfectly the spirit of Zappa's music while stamping its own authority on the adventurous arrangements with its exuberant, joyous ensemble playing and in the quality of the solos. Ed Palermo, with impeccable olfactory taste, has done both big band jazz and Zappa's music a huge service. If you didn't like big band jazz before, then the riotous, swinging celebration...may well be the record that converts you. If you didn't get Frank Zappa's music, then this record may make you consider his vast musical legacy in a whole new light."*

*– Ian Patterson, All About Jazz*

*"Zappa once famously said "Jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny." Ed Palermo is making one hell of a wonderful stink."*

*– Daniel Spicer, Pop Matters*

Long revered and celebrated for his insistently inventive jazz arrangements of **Frank Zappa** compositions, New Jersey saxophonist/composer/arranger **Ed Palermo** returns with his fourth album featuring his big band playing his jaw-dropping, brain-busting, and wildly antic charts. **Oh No! Not Jazz!!** is the **Ed Palermo Big Band's** third project for Cuneiform, but this time Palermo is offering his own jazz vision along side Zappa's music. It's a fascinating juxtaposition, with Palermo's talent-laden 18-piece orchestra digging into his originals, which stand up effectively next to his arrangements of Zappa's ingenious songbook.

With titles like **"Let's Reproduce," "Nostalgia Revisited,"** and **"Prelude To An Insult,"** Palermo's compositions seem to be muscling in on Zappa's wry, absurdist sensibility. But it's more that Zappa shaped his sense of humor (i.e. bent his young mind) than his compositional vision, as Palermo's charts swing fiercely and owe far more to **Thad Jones** and **Mel Lewis** than the **Mothers of Invention**.

"There is a lot of humor, and I probably got a lot of that from Zappa," Palermo notes, while also claiming his deep jazz roots. "When you hear me play saxophone my heroes are **Phil Woods** and **Cannonball Adderley**."

Palermo's big band has been dedicated to Zappa's music for more than two decades, and no ensemble has done more to focus attention on Zappa's tremendous body of work as a composer. Stocked with top-shelf New York players, the orchestra features incisive improvisers such as trombonist **Joe Fielder**, violinist **Katie Jacoby**, baritone saxophonist **Barbara Cifelli**, and the supremely versatile drummer **Ray Marchica**. Palermo's latest contribution to Zappaology opens with the epic **"Inca Roads,"** featuring **Bruce McDaniel's** searing guitar work and special guest **Napoleon Murphy Brock** on callisthenic vocals. Navigating the quickly shifting time signatures with its usual aplomb, the band sounds as sharp as ever.

Palermo gleaned **"The Uncle Meat Variations"** and **"The Dog Breath Variations"** from **The Mothers of Invention's** 1969 experimental masterwork **Uncle Meat**, gracefully rendering the cinematic breadth, vivid tonal palette, and unapologetic beauty of Zappa's vision. He's equally masterly when it comes to capturing Zappa's sheer swaggering joie de vivre, as on the rampaging arrangement of **"Lumpy Gravy,"** which fades up in the midst of the action just as trumpeter **Ronnie Buttacavoli** launches into a growling, smearing, plunger mute solo. The first disc closes, appropriately enough, with **"America Drinks And Goes Home,"** a tune that features the impressive vocals and hilarious commentary by **Mike James**, who sounds uncannily like **Frank Sinatra** crossed with **Mark Murphy**.

James briefly reappears on the opening track of the second disc to advise listeners "Hold on to your skirt there, sweetheart, this ought to be one swinging affair." However you're attired, he speaks the truth, as Palermo's original compositions and arrangements swing with authority. The opener, **"Moosh,"** moves through several distinct phases, culminating in an insouciant alto solo by Palermo and a sizzling violin statement by **Katie Jacoby**. Despite its pugnacious title, **"Prelude to An Insult"** sounds more jaunty than peeved, with the dark rumbling tone of **Barbara Cifelli's** bari saxophone providing a lovely contrast to Palermo's liquid alto.

**John Palermo's** elegant, folksy mandolin sounds decidedly unthreatening on the brief **"Prelude to a Catastrophe,"** which ushers in the jittery, anxiously swelling **"A Catastrophe (Is Just Around the Corner),"** and **Ben Kono's** superbly inquisitive tenor solo. Palermo is at his most inventive on **"Let's Reproduce,"** a wily tune that oozes suggestively rather than bumping and grinding. He shows off his sensitive side with the lithe melody **"Nostalgia Revisited,"** a lovely piece that avoids sentimentality. The longest Palermo original, **"The Insult,"** feels like a forgotten page from the Mingus songbook, with all the roiling emotion, lush romanticism and surfeit of musical ideas one would expect.

*[press release continued on verso]*

While Zappa doesn't cast much of a shadow over Palermo's writing, his influence is unmistakable on the antic **"Why Is the Doctor Barking?"** a tune that begs for a Warner Bros. cartoon, and that features some space age keyboard work by **Ted Kooshian**. The album closes with an extended goodbye **"Good Night, Everybody! God Loves Ya!"**, starting with another hilarious turn by the put-upon vocalist **Mike James**, who tries to get a word in edgewise amidst the horn solos. A brief Ellingtonian take on the **Beatles'** **"She's So Heavy"** closes out the session (or does it?).

Palermo's passion for Frank Zappa music predates his interest in jazz. Indeed, he credits Zappa with opening his mind up to the harmonic vistas of **John Coltrane**. Born in Ocean City, New Jersey on June 14, 1954, Palermo grew up in the cultural orbit of Philadelphia, which was about an hour drive away. He started playing clarinet in elementary school, and soon turned to the alto saxophone. He also took up the guitar, and followed his growing interest in Zappa straight to modern jazz.

"I was particularly interested in Zappa on a compositional level," Palermo says. "'King Kong' was one of my favorite songs from the 9th grade on and that helped me get into John Coltrane's modal period."

Not exactly obsessed with practicing, he caught the jazz bug while attending DePaul University, and took to the alto sax with renewed diligence inspired by **Edgar Winter, Woods** and **Adderley**. Before he graduated he was leading his own band and making a good living as a studio player recording commercial jingles. But like so many jazz musicians he answered New York's siren call, moving to Manhattan in 1977. After a year of playing jam sessions and scuffling Palermo landed a coveted gig with **Tito Puente**, a four-year stint that immersed him in Afro-Cuban music.

An encounter with trumpeter **Woody Shaw's** septet at the Village Vanguard in the late 1970s stoked his interest in writing and arranging for multiple horns, and by the end of the decade he had launched a nine-piece rehearsal band with five horns. Between **Don Sebesky's** well-regarded book *The Contemporary Arranger* and advice from **Dave Lalama** and **Tim Ouimette**. "I got a lot of my questions answered," Palermo says, and I'll love them forever. Then the real education was trial and error. I lived in a little apartment with no TV or furniture. All I had was a card table, and once a week I'd rehearse my nonet, then listen to the cassette of the rehearsal and make all the changes."

Palermo made his recording debut in 1982, an impressive session featuring heavyweights such as **David Sanborn, Edgar Winter** and **Randy Brecker**. As a consummate studio cat and sideman, he toured and recorded with an array of stars, including **Aretha Franklin, Eddie Palmieri, Celia Cruz, Lena Horne, Tony Bennett, Mel Tormé, Lou Rawls, Melba Moore, The Spinners** and many others. As an arranger, he's written charts for the **Tonight Show Band, Maurice Hines, Eddy Fischer, Melissa Walker**, and a concert by **James Brown** at the Hollywood Bowl.

Palermo had been leading his big band for more than a decade before the Zappa concept started coming together. Inspired by electric guitar master **Mike Keneally**, who performed with Zappa on some of his final concerts before Zappa's death in 1993, Palermo decided to arrange a program of 12 Zappa tunes. When the time came to debut the material at one of the band's regular gigs at the **Bitter End** in early 1994, a sold-out crowd greeted the band.

"The Internet was just becoming powerful, and word really got around," Palermo says. "We were used to paying small audiences, and the place was packed. There were people who had driven down from Canada, and up from West Virginia who didn't have a clue who I was, but they wanted to hear Zappa's music. It was an amazing night."

The Ed Palermo Big Band earned international attention with its 1997 debut *The Ed Palermo Big Band Plays Frank Zappa* on **Astor Place Records**. With Palermo's brilliant arrangements and soloists such as **Bob Mintzer, Chris Potter, Dave Samuels, Mike Stern**, and **Mike Keneally**, the album made an undisputable case for Zappa jazz concept.

He followed up in 2006 with *Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance*, the band's **Cuneiform** debut. Once again, the band received enviable reviews, with *Paradoxone.uk* declaring the album "Wonderful, breathtaking, fantastic, exhilarating, great sound, great production, great musicianship...I run out of superlatives."

With 2009's *Eddy Love Frank*, the project continued to bear luscious fruit. Exploring Palermo's ever evolving and expanding book of Zappa compositions, the band continues to play with verve and consummate musicianship, a testament to the music's stimulating allure. As *Jazz Times* noted, "Palermo's arrangements and these performances are precise, dedicated, raucous and incisive—just like Zappa himself."

At this point, the Palermo Big Band has honed some 300 Zappa arrangements, including six separate and distinct charts for **"King Kong."** With a steady cast of dedicated players, many of whom have been in the band for more than a decade, Palermo has created a singular institution that seems to effortlessly bridge the worlds of jazz, art rock and classical music. As *Oh No! Not Jazz!!* makes perfectly clear, there's no danger that the deep well of Zappa's music is going to run out of creative juice any time soon.

*For more information on The Ed Palermo Big Band, see:*  
[www.palermobigband.com](http://www.palermobigband.com) – [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)

### What the press has said about Ed Palermo Big Band's:

#### **EDDY LOVES FRANK (CUNEIFORM, 2009)**

"Bandleader Ed Palermo's third release of Frank Zappa compositions is a persuasive and deeply personalized revitalization of the artist's songbook, as he continues to spin a thoroughly hip vibe... With his sixteen-piece band, executing difficult charts, Palermo's horns arrangements are teeming with polytonal layers, crisp accents and gobs of verve... Palermo offers multiple mood-evoking thematic forays, including nicely placed dabs of humor, and warmly designed choruses... Saxophonist Phil Chester, trumpeter Ronnie Buttacavoli and others, engage in ballsy soloing spots...to complement some straight-ahead swing breakouts...the band is a precision machine, keeping in line with Zappa's intricately engineered movements and seemingly impossible time signatures."

- Glenn Astarita, *EJazznews*, August 13, 2009, [www.ejazznews.com](http://www.ejazznews.com)

"For those of us who love all things Frank Zappa and the mighty sounds of big bands, this is the album! It's all here – a 16 piece jazz band playing Zappa tunes with masterful arrangements that showcase Zappa's compositional brilliance in a jazz format. The tight, precise playing is fantastic, and it's obvious the band is having a great time... The EPBB has been doing jazz covers of Zappa's work for 15 years, and it shows. ... The performance here is masterful and solid, and conveys Zappa's sense of humor. A great band with great material and a wonderful tribute to the genius of Zappa."

- Pam Thompson, *Exposé*, Spring 2010

"...to his credit Palermo makes no attempt to reproduce the original arrangements in any way, instead using FZ's compositions as a springboard for some brilliant structural rearrangements as well as his trademark energetic swing adaptations. ... All fans of Zappa's music really need to hear this!"

- Peter Thelen, *Exposé*, Spring 2010

"...Ed Palermo's lifelong fascination with Frank Zappa's music continues with this splendid recording, where Palermo arranges – with vitality, insight and fun – such musically smart Zappa works as "Night School" and "Dupree's Paradise." -

- Jay Lustig, *NJ.com*, December 27 2009, [www.nj.com](http://www.nj.com)

"... Palermo's commitment to the music of Zappa is no minor affair. ... *Eddy Loves Frank* is an understatement... What makes Palermo's arrangements...work...is the sense of fun he brings to the music. ... *Eddy Loves Frank* really swings. ... Take the first track, "Night School," originally released on the 1986 *Jazz From Hell* album. ... One of the difficulties...was the sometime "gimmicky" sound of the instrument. Here, all of that is stripped away immediately, revealing a song with a beautiful melody. Ed's alto sax solo midway through is a revelation... Palermo never goes for the obvious in choosing tracks to arrange. Of the seven FZ tunes *Eddy Loves Frank* contains, two hail from the relatively obscure *Live At The Roxy And Elsewhere* (1974). Both "Echidna's Arf (Of You,)" and "Don't You Ever Wash That Thing" were concert staples, but were never released as studio recordings. It is fascinating to hear an 18-piece big band recreate these classic mid-Seventies pieces, as they are prime Zappa-fusion. ... Another song that has flown under the radar over the years is "Regyptian Strut." ... The way Palermo has approached it is something of a wonder, and the trombone solo by Joe Fiedler puts everything completely over the top. ..."

- Greg Barbrick, *BlogCritics Music*, December 29, 2009

"Palermo has now become the jazz face of Zappa, having prepared close to 200 transcripts that leaven the music with jazz harmony, while leaving the inherent flavor and quirkiness intact. The charts lend themselves to lush orchestration as much as they leave room for individual musicians to make distinctive statements... the players are one with vision, verve and vitality... Palermo steps out of the Zappa frame with "America the Beautiful,"... Sung with warmth and sincerity by Bruce McDaniel, with the voice of Veronica Martell swirling midst the instrumentation, the song makes for an engaging finish to the record."

- Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, October 7, 2009

"Ed Palermo leads this sixteen piece big band through yet another remarkable set of compositions by the late Frank Zappa. By no means are these slavish covers, they are liberal reinterpretations. His meticulous attention to detail, and his highly creative reconsiderations of Frank's music opens it up in a welcoming and engaging manner to a potentially much wider audience."

- Greg Parsons, *Dream Magazine*, #10

"This is the third collection of Frank Zappa tunes imaginatively arranged and performed by the Ed Palermo Big Band... It is...the best one yet, with the ensemble of 12 horns and a rhythm section cruising through complex orchestrations with seemingly breathtaking ease. With their high degree of commitment and respect for the material and an equally high degree of technical skill, Palermo and his colleagues again raise some of Zappa's more obscure instrumental gems to new, unimagined heights. For example, take the opener, "Night School." ... here it has been given a dense, driving horn arrangement that veers fearlessly from jazz to rock and classical influences, including a devastating, note-perfect sax soli section and some great alto sax improvisation by Palermo himself. As FZ himself said, there IS a place for humor in music, and Palermo demonstrates that with his interpretation of "Don't You Ever Wash That Thing?"... After a comic introduction it moves uptempo with a confident swagger and features outstanding solos by Kooshian, Palermo and McDaniel, whose keening, controlled feedback and snaking lines remind the listener of Zappa's own fret board style. Zappa...produced enough mind-boggling music in his brief 52 years that bandleaders like Palermo still find new ways to interpret it while remaining true to its unique spirit. I suspect Frank would approve."

-Tom Ineck, *Berman Music Foundation*

"...the eclectic Zappa transcended genres, and in Palermo's hands his music becomes an expanded "third stream," a combination of jazz and classical elements...plus rock. ... The Palermo group has been playing Zappa for 15 years, and it is expert at the rhythmic and stylistic jump cuts in the music. ... the album is a revelation."

- Owen Cordle, *News & Observer*, September 20, 2009, [www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com)

"Saxophonist/arranger and acknowledged fan Ed Palermo is helping to keep Zappa's concepts and compositions alive by producing jazz interpretations of Zappa music and in the process has introduced jazz listeners to Zappa and/or leading Zappa aficionados to jazz music. ... Palermo...has led a progressive big band for three decades and has performed Zappa's work for half that time, bringing Zappa's notoriously difficult material to enthusiastic crowds. *Eddy Loves Frank* is Palermo's third Zappa tribute and his best collection so far. What really makes this project successful is that Palermo's arrangements – which are readymade for ornate orchestration but also have room for soloing – are heavy on jazz harmony while retaining Zappa's original built-in characteristics and humorous impulses. ... Palermo makes use of challenging Zappa songs that were not incipiently construed in a jazz vein. In most instances, Palermo peels the numbers apart in unique ways and coats them with his own orchestral enhancements, sustaining Zappa's melodic and harmonic designs but giving them a different texture. An example is opener "Night School," from the Synclavier-dominated, Grammy-winning 1986 Zappa outing *Jazz from Hell*. Palermo intertwines the brass players into a unified entity that discloses the composition's elegance and emotional heart. Palermo's arranging skills come to the fore on the second track, an outstanding rendition of *Echidna's Arf (Of You)*. The 9:49 piece is the album's longest and is nearly twice as lengthy as Zappa's 1974 version. Palermo orchestrates profuse lines that extend the tune while staying true to Zappa's intent. Meanwhile, the rhythm section continually shifts tempo. Drummer Ray Marchica and bassist Paul Adamy place more emphasis on swing during "Regyptian Strut," from Zappa's 1979 opus *Sleep Dirt*. This is another illustration of how Palermo does not conform to the way Zappa performed his music. Palermo restructures the arrangement to include boisterous taunting while providing a logical space for solos from Phil Chester (soprano sax) and trombonist Joe Fiedler. Palermo and his big band execute "Regyptian Strut" so well the new treatment seems customary even when it is not. ... Zappa often made light of U.S. cities... "What's New in Baltimore" features a luring Bob Quaranta piano solo and a vigorous Ben Kono tenor presentation. "Let's Move To Cleveland" is refashioned to emphasize the melodically-spindled theme that has a jaunty modern verve. Listening to this big band resolutely advance with such animated instincts and transition at a second's notice is both enormously

entertaining and remarkable. Eddy Loves Frank is an adroit big band jazz delight, but it is also a commendable introduction to an artist whose work was wide-ranging and genre-free. While Palermo's arrangements let the music breathe, much credit must also go to engineer Steve Jankowski and Bruce McDaniel, who produced, mixed and also helped engineer the record. The studio production is reverberant and clean. Each soloist is marked out distinctly in the mix and the group sound is always warm and full..."  
-Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, December 10, 2009, www.audiophileaudition.com

"Early in the first cut, "High School", I found a softer edge to Zappa's music than I remembered, or perhaps that's only how Palermo's band plays it, gentler than the acerbic Zappa of yore. Then Palermo hits a wrong note with the inclusion of "America the Beautiful". Yet on an album otherwise devoted to the iconoclast Frank Zappa... it feels very much out of place."  
-Michael R. Mosher, *Leonardo On-Line*, April 1, 2010, www.leonardo.info

"...this disc is marvelous--and precisely what you'd want to play for someone who enjoyed Zappa's Grand Wazoo and Waka Jawaka albums but was put off by the "funny stuff" that followed thereafter. Bandleader Palermo...has created something unique here, and something that accords Zappa all the respect he has long deserved. Seek it out!"  
-Dave DiMartino, *Yahoo! Music*, May 19, 2013, music.yahoo.com

"...The 17-piece band are capable of the layered and undulating textures that were a hallmark of Zappa's jazz and orchestral writing. ...Frank would be pleased."  
-David Greenberger, *Metroland Online*, www.metroland.net

"...Palermo arranges Zappa's deeply musical, intelligent works with characteristic vitality, insight and fun. ..." - *Zan Stewart, NJ.com*, July 02, 2009  
"Since 1994, Ed Palermo has arranged and performed over 200 works by the late Frank Zappa, a brilliant musician whose often controversial lyrics distracted people from his gifts as a composer. Putting together a tightly rehearsed band consisting of New York City-based musicians, Palermo...excelling at putting his personal stamp on Zappa's music in a jazz setting, drawing material from different periods in the rocker's career. The opener, "Night School," was originally composed on the Synclavier, deemed too difficult for musicians to play... Palermo and his players dive head first into this complex work, with the leader soloing with gusto on alto sax. Longtime pianist Bob Quaranta gets the spotlight in the sarcastic "What's New in Baltimore" and also takes "Dupree's Paradise" into new territory. To appreciate Ed Palermo's Big Band, one has to see them perform in person, as their energy is even more potent. This is another memorable tribute by Palermo to his hero."  
-Ken Dryden, *All About Jazz*, December 8, 2009, www.allaboutjazz.com

"His take on Zappa's music is such that it transcends the notion of repertory, and such is the enthusiasm and commitment with which the band puts the music across that it's obvious they know it well too; the way they hurtle through "Echidna's Arf (Of You)" sets out of the stall in no uncertain terms. Seeing this band live would be a rocking night out because they're obviously polished to the point where the music shines...despite never disguising the band's depth of character. Palermo's band relishes what it does... The trombone swooping in the opening passage of "Regyptian Strut" testifies to this as much as the band's easy greasing proves what an overrated commodity polish can be. "What's New In Baltimore"...exemplifies the depth of identity that Zappa's music has to such a degree that the somehow pertinent comparison with Charles Ives, in terms of both men being true American originals, can be made. As a collective this band knows that and the results speak for themselves."  
- Nic Jones, *All About Jazz*, Dec 3, 2009, www.allaboutjazz.com

"One of the great things about Palermo's albums is his choice of material. Showing himself to be a true fan, he often picks obscure or overlooked tracks. A case in point is "Night School," originally from *Jazz from Hell*, Zappa's album consisting almost entirely of Synclavier (state-of-the-art sequencing/sampling computer circa 1986) performances. Palermo's arrangement is fantastic and he contributes a really nice alto solo... Palermo...isn't afraid to alter the form of a song to make it work for the band. He doesn't change the melody at all, just the form ... Palermo doesn't strictly adhere to FZ's notes on paper, but he does it with such a deep knowledge of the tune and executes it so well that it seems natural... Eddy loves Frank all right... [3½ stars out of 5]"  
- Sean Westergaard, *Allmusic*, www.allmusic.com

"Zappa was...a master of big band composition. Some four decades ago, when most rock bands were content churning out simple arrangements played with drums, guitar and bass, Zappa was writing multifaceted compositions featuring strings, intricate percussion, and complex horn charts. Distracted by the satirical and occasionally frivolous nature of some of his more well-known songs...the general public seemed to be less aware of Zappa's stunning instrumental work... Let's all say a collective 'thank you' to Ed Palermo. ...all of the complexity of the original songs remain intact, lovingly arranged to allow improvisation, never played without a palpable sense of *fun*, and always remaining true to the familiar Zappa-ism, '*music is the best*.' The Ed Palermo Big Band is one of the few bands that have successfully translated Zappa's compositions outside of the context of Zappa's in-house 'conceptual continuity,' and (in particular) the theatricality of their original settings. The track list will delight Zappa fans. Palermo includes material from the later touring-years in Frank's 'post-Mothers' period. ..."Echidna's Arf (of You)," and the challenging "Dupree's Paradise" stand out... 'Dupree's' has never sounded more like a hard-core jazz lounge. Palermo's talented group of soloists...do a fine job stating the intricate melodies and taking them into a more conventional Big Band context. Not only is *Eddy Loves Frank* a fine Big Band Jazz album on its own, but it's also a good introduction to the more jazz-oriented instrumental music of Frank Zappa... Palermo's arrangements allow the music to breathe and Bruce McDaniel's production is clean and vibrant, allowing the soloists to make their mark clearly in the mix...very good sounding CD, indeed. Play it loud. [4½ clocks out of 5]" -Bert Saraco, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, www.tollbooth.org  
"What Edgard Varèse was to Frank Zappa, Frank Zappa is to me." New York-based composer and bandleader Ed Palermo once stated. ... his 18-piece orchestra have perfected over 200 songs from Frank's varied repertoire. For his third album of Zappa tunes, the saxophonist gets more adventurous in his selections ... tried-and-true Zappa classics appear on *Eddy Loves Frank*, like "Regyptian Strut", "Dupree's Paradise", and "Let's Move to Cleveland". Even more intriguing...is Palermo's choice to reconfigure the computerized "Night School"... Say what you will about the decision to end the album with a sincere cover of "America the Beautiful", but hardcore Zappa fans will certainly see it as a fitting tribute to *The Best Band You Never Heard in Your Life*." [7/10]  
-Ron Hart, *Pop Matters*, December 13, 2009, www.popmatters.com

"W. Royal Stokes's Best CDs of 2009... Ed Palermo Big Band, Eddy Loves Frank (Cuneiform)" - W. Royal Stokes, *Jazzhouse Diaries*, www.jazzhouse.org

### **TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF WHEN YOU DANCE (CUNEIFORM, 2006)**

"...One doesn't necessarily have to be a devoted FZ listener--or even profess familiarity with the original music--to appreciate or understand Ed Palermo's arrangements. Although Zappa's unique style and twist in moods is present in each of the tracks, Palermo's own palette of colors shines through. "RDNZL," for example, is like a rollercoaster taking the listener down and up a variety of big band jazz-infused moments, while flirting with its rock 'n' roll heritage. Palermo sometimes strips Zappa's music from its lyrics, so whatever story there's left to tell, Palermo has to make his arrangements work twice as hard to get the job done. His musicians really pull it off... Besides the whack, the humor and the intricate ingredients Zappa was known for, Palermo added a touch of melancholy and sensitive awareness one wouldn't ascribe to the genius of his hero."  
- Gina Vodegal, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, December 10, 2006

"More than perhaps any other 20th-century musician, Frank Zappa celebrated both the visceral and the cerebral, obscuring and enhancing his memorable melodies with mercurial, complex harmonies, irregular variations on rock and funk rhythms, and bawdy humor mixed with real pathos. ... Ed Palermo and his big band celebrate that musical legacy by re-imagining nine Zappa songs from a jazz perspective.

**Palermo developed these charts during years of live shows with these musicians, and their mastery of the material shows in the performances, which turn on a dime yet feel fierce with spontaneous invention.** "RDNZL" tracks Zappa's dizzying excursions with remarkable fidelity while still carving out

space for imaginative solos.... Palermo creates a memorable atmosphere in "Sleep Dirt" by setting Phil Chester's soprano sax solo and some other high-end melodic filigree against a rhythm section rife with bass undertow... **Palermo's arrangements and these performances are precise, dedicated, raucous and incisive—just like Zappa himself.**"

– Andrew Lindemann Malone, *Jazz Times*, www.jazztimes.com, January/February 2007

"...It's to their credit...that the Ed Palermo Big Band recognize how adaptable some of Zappa's works are to the big-band format. *Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance* puts eight of Zappa's composition...into a big-band context. Using almost 20 musicians, it sticks almost wholly to an instrumental approach... **the Ed Palermo Big Band achieve the difficult task of making Zappa's music more accessible...and certainly give it more of a jazzy big-band swing, without selling out.** These versions won't replace the originals...but they have a listenable breeziness that could work as an entry to the music for listeners who might be put off by the more jagged ugliness that Zappa was often wont to insert into his own renditions.[Rating: 3 ½ stars]"

– Richie Unterberger, All Music Guide, www.allmusic.com,

"... "Take Your Clothes off When You Dance" is saxophonist Ed Palermo's second collection of Zappa tunes in the big-band format, and it is another grand success, from the spirited performances to Palermo's comical liner notes to the cover cartoon (by Palermo's sister-in-law) depicting musicians in the buff, with instruments discreetly positioned... Palermo himself kicks things off on alto sax with the swirling melody of "RDNZL"... The whole band joins in on the stop-time shouts and the affair wraps up with a trademark Count Basie ending. The title track gets a syncopated Latin treatment, perfect for the circular melody line... "The Gumbo Variations," which debuted on... "Hot Rats" as an extended jam nearly 17 minutes long, here is reduced to about six minutes of funky bliss, with solos by Dave Riekenberg on tenor sax and the fabulous Carl Restivo on wah-wah guitar... Restivo also sings the haunting first half of "Mom and Dad/Oh No," while most of the second half is performed as an instrumental with very jazzy alto sax by Palermo.... Coming in at over nine minutes, this medley tour de force may be the brightest gem in the jewel box. Palermo's arrangements take advantage of the entire 16-piece band, as the outfit passes the ball back and forth in typical Zappa fashion. Dead serious passages often alternate with pure hilarity..."

– Tom Ineck, *Berman Music Foundation Jazz*, bermanmusicfoundation.org, 2007

"... Palermo's arrangement sounds great. 'RDNZL' asks for dynamics and that's exactly what you get. ... Next up is 'Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance'... Arranged by Ed Palermo and Jose Madera, we get a superb afro-latin version. ...this is great stuff. 'Take Your Clothes Off' is turned around and inside out at the same time. ... 'Sleep Dirt' could well be my favourite track on this disc. Tip to the hat for Phil Chester: a beautiful tone and a very melodic solo against a very open-sounding band. I love it. ... **"Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance" is one of these albums that will stay in your CD-player for a long while. It's great. ... Highly recommended.**"

– Peter van Laarhoven, *United Mutations*, August 3, 2006, www.united-mutations.com

"...This is the second Palermo collection of Frank Zappa compositions and, like the first CD, this one continues to enthrall. **It's fun and serious at the same time. Arrangements are superb and the band seems to get tighter as the CD develops...**"

– Doug Ramsey, *Riffides*, artsjournal.com, July 14, 2006

"...**Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance is a vibrant re-imagining of eight Zappa classics, done with...jazz flair rather than a note for note remake, giving these already masterful songs an accessible sheen that should easily bring Zappa's music to the mainstream jazz fan.**

Palermo's band consists of 16 members and 2 guests, with most of them part of the horn section, giving the overall sound a huge and rich presentation that helps these songs really swing in a sort of Grand Wazoo way. "Pound For A Brown On the Bus" really cooks with plenty of soaring sax and muscular horns, while the cascading melodies and tight rhythms of "Rdnzl" sees the lengthy Zappa guitar solo...replaced by horns and reeds... The quirky, complex, & progressive side of Zappa's arsenal comes out through "Mom and Dad/Oh No", with Palermo's band really firing on all cylinders on a song with many intricate parts. Ultimately, **Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance really is a blast, whether you are a Frank Zappa fan or not. For the longtime Zappa fan the CD offers up classic songs given a new and refreshing treatment, and for the casual fan who loves jazz, there's plenty of stunning jazz fan fun here to tantalize your senses.** [Rating: 4 stars]"

– Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, seaoftranquility.com, July 3, 2006

"...**Palermo has spent a dozen years playing Zappa's music, and he and his cohorts nail the rhythmic pleasures of Zappa's compositions with spot-on accuracy. The inevitable swing generated by a good big band – and this band is good – breathes especially well on the title track, which adds Latin elements to a six-minute performance so rich, it seems like an epic.** The one-two punch of "Dwarf Nebula Processional March & Dwarf Nebula" and "Pound For a Brown On the Bus"... shows off Palermo's coloristic affinity for Dmitri Shostakovitch and Sergei Prokofiev; both tracks boast charts that bring several strands of Zappa's compositional scope together, with great writing for the clarinets and flutes. ...the arrangements favor the horn and ensemble work, rather than the often guitar-centered originals. ... "Mom and Dad", one of FZ's loveliest melodies, has an exotic setting worthy of the great arranger Les Baxter, and Restivo does justice to the lyrics with a coolly restrained vocal. Zappa's warm, witty organ parts were one of the many pleasures of his writing, and Ted Kooshian caresses the keys yummily on "Moggio"... **Sleaze, humor, genius, and hubris – more could one want?"**

– Larry Nai, *Signal to Noise*, Fall 2006, Issue #43

"All his adult life, Frank Zappa struggled to be recognized as a serious composer who just happened to be working largely in a rock idiom. ...orchestras and ensembles...continue to interpret his compositions, with the approval of classical music heavyweights... Zappa was—and remains in posterity—a singular American composer of great breadth and vision, every bit as important as Copland, Ives or Gershwin. Strange, then, that the jazz world has been somewhat slower to catch on to the brilliance of Zappa's arrangements. ... his work was constantly infused with elements of jazz: despite his protestations, he's...one of the original pioneers of jazz-rock, and his many bands boasted countless accomplished jazz musicians, from George Duke to Jean Luc Ponty.

... it's possible to see what Ed Palermo is doing with his Big Band as an attempt to restate Zappa's jazz credentials on the back of his new-found classical kudos. For this second album with the Big Band, Palermo repeats the formula of the first...by arranging some of Zappa's most fiendishly funky and groove-based compositions for a full-scale 16-piece jazz ensemble, with the emphasis on huge, rambunctious Count Basie-style horn charts and plenty of room for soloing. And you know what? It really burns. Take the title track, for instance, which transforms Zappa's original jaunty pop-pastiche into an irresistibly sweaty, hugely authentic slice of percussion-heavy salsa, without losing one ounce of Zappa's tongue-in-cheek humour. This is masterful arrangement: the ability to see beyond the idiom and find instead the fundamental building blocks that give a piece of music its essential character.

Elsewhere, Palermo plays it more straight—more faithfully recreating Zappa's originals...but with some of the thorniness of Zappa's ragged, disorientating charts smoothed out and sweetened. Mostly, Palermo seems intent on finding the latent groove within these pieces—often obscured by Zappa's penchant for tricky time signatures, but here brought to the fore and held together by Paul Adamy's rock-solid electric bass. And when Palermo drops in a few bars of straight-ahead, 4/4, up-tempo, swinging jazz...these tunes flower into the jazzy workouts he clearly always imagined them to be. It's a winning vindication of his whole concept in re-scoring these pieces for jazz big band, and a genuine treat for Zappa-friendly jazz heads. ... Clearly, this is a labour of love for Palermo, born of his genuine admiration and passion for Zappa's music... The bottom line is that, for Zappa fans, this is almost as good as a new Zappa album and the closest thing we're ever going to get. Zappa once famously said "Jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny." Ed Palermo is making one hell of a wonderful stink. [Rating: 8 out of 10]"

– Daniel Spicer, *Pop Matters*, August 30, 2006, www.popmatters.com

"...**JAZZ ALBUM OF THE MONTH OF OCTOBER... Wonderful, breathtaking, fantastic, exhilarating, great sound, great production, great musicianship, great sleeve, great concept., I run out of superlatives to describe 'Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance'. It's an album that's not just for Frank Zappa fans, it's an album for everyone!**"

– Phil Jackson, *Paradox One*, www.paradoxone.co.uk

“...sax player Ed Palermo and band have released a second disc of **Zappa interpretations that may upset the protectors of his legacy but will reveal to new and original fans some less obvious aspects of his orchestral arrangements. As Palermo and associates in true jazz style open up sections of these compositions we hear the accessibility of Zappa...**

Palermo does the job of a sophisticated interpreter-respect the original intention and design while using that design to find his own creative balance between freedom and discipline.”  
– James Hopkins, *Charlottesville Newsweekly*, c-ville.com

“...Some good repertory choices by Palermo, who had decided to mostly dedicate his attention to "first period" (let's define it as roughly 1966-1970) compositions, which he obviously felt as nearer to his heart... Quite a few nice orchestral colours, with muted trumpets, flutes and clarinets. A nice wind section, backed by a good and agile rhythm section... the music is always happy and joyous, never rhetorical or lugubrious... all solos... always show a link - via logic or feeling - to their themes, in so avoiding one of the "jazzy" most common failures. Compared to its predecessor, the present album sounds a lot better... Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance shows its love right from the graphics, with the funny cover design, those liner notes à la Uncle Meat and those little things (like "tasty little sucker") that Fans of Zappa will be quite happy to spot. ... In my opinion Sleep Dirt is maybe the high point of the whole album: delicate and more than a bit sad, with a very good and quite appropriate solo by Phil Chester on soprano sax...

In an unspecified place among Uncle Meat, Roxy & Elsewhere, Zappa In New York and The Best Band You Never Heard In Your Life Ed Palermo appears to have found himself. See you on tour?”  
– Beppe Colli, *Clouds and Clocks*, June 23, 2006, www.cloudsandclocks.net

“Under the direction of Palermo this marvelous eighteen-piece band revels in the structural complexity and wonderfully melodic conceptions which characterized Zappa's prolific yet all too short career. These are no slavish reproductions either. Zappa, who on his final tour played a reggae version of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" would no doubt have been tickled by Palermo's slick salsa interpretation of the song "Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance"... "Gumbo Variations"... rocks like hell. Carl Restivo takes the album's only guitar solo, wild and hugely enjoyable. Less predictable material is visited. Zappa's acoustic gem "Sleep Dirt" highlights Palermo's wonderful arrangement as much as it does Zappa's ability to pen a sensitive, beautiful tune. Like Zappa, and Duke Ellington before, Palermo's main instrument is his band. And with him at the helm it manages to capture perfectly the spirit of Zappa's music whilst stamping its own authority on the adventurous arrangements with its exuberant, joyous ensemble playing and in the quality of the solos. Ed Palermo, with impeccable olfactory taste, has done both big band jazz and Zappa's music a huge service. If you didn't like big band jazz before, then the riotous, swinging celebration that is Take Your Clothes off When You Dance may well be the record that converts you. If you didn't get Frank Zappa's music, then this record might make you consider his vast musical legacy in a whole new light.”

– Ian Patterson, *All About Jazz*, May 4, 2007, www.allaboutjazz.com

“... Zappa's music has been merged with jazz before, but Palermo brings in a distinct touch with his arrangements, which have a sense of adventure and a sly sense of humour. ...he not only evokes Zappa's zany intelligence, he gives the music a tantalising body and a scintillating soul.

“RDNZL” lends itself perfectly to a big band arrangement. Palermo's chart opens the vent for five soloists and gives interplay and dialogue a place... The ensemble lines of the horns are as smooth as silk, but the soloists cut a deep groove, led by Palermo, who nips at the melodic line on the alto saxophone. ... A bit of funk from the organ of Ted Kooshian and the rocking pummel of the horns are fine harbingers of what is to come on “Gumbo Variations.” However, Dave Riekenberg adds the essence: his tenor saxophone spews lines that are at first flinty, before they go into a trajectory, wailing and swinging and creating a host of flaming ideas. In comes Charlie Restivo rocking out on the guitar... The heat is on and it never cools off. ... Palermo shows that a big band and jazz can do credit to Zappa—and do it really well.”

– Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, August 29, 2006, www.allaboutjazz.com

“... 54 minutes of fun-time music. ... All of the music was composed by Frank Zappa. ... these renditions are quite as studiously carefree as the originals, although the band has impressed their own flavor on the material. There are brass sections aplenty, all crying out in emphatic jubilation. These horns generate the nucleus of the music, conveying intricate melodies with strident definition. ... A bevy of woodwinds brings a rollicking whimsy to the dense structure. The percussion is complex and steadfast, delivering cascades of dynamic... In typical Zappa fashion, the mix frequently pauses to allow a catch of beats to resound with startling clarity before the instruments come crashing back in to reestablish the wall of fun. ... The compositions themselves are flawlessly bewitching. The band's takes on these tunes are quite fresh, however, injecting idiosyncratic swing and Latino flairs, and transforming the tuneage into doses of pure delight.”

– Matt Howarth, *Sonic Curiosity*, www.soniccuriosity.com

“For the past several years alto saxophonist/arranger Ed Palermo and his big band have been performing the music of Frank Zappa—and Palermo has it down to a deeply personalized science. Sure, the original compositions are amazingly complex, but Palermo's arrangements successfully fuse Zappa's idiosyncratic harmonic approach with torrid swing vamps and other creative departures. Drummer Ray Marchica effortlessly handles the difficult time signatures and provides a solid foundation for the orchestral parts. Organist Ted Kooshian's sleek and fluent soloing adds spice and color. Carl Restivo's endearing vocals...inject childlike innocence into a piece teeming with rich horn charts and knotty twists and turns. Palermo's latest effort is an irresistible charmer and likely to find its way onto numerous end of year top-ten lists.”

– Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, September 11, 2006, www.allaboutjazz.com

“...big band music still has an important place in jazz. ...Ed Palermo...has continued his exploration of the music of Frank Zappa. ...the disc showcases his (often-overlooked) compositional talent. ...the straightforward arrangements still illuminate Zappa's nimble musicality.

The band ably handles Zappa's quirky melodic deviations and trademark time signatures, and its own musicianship is never in doubt. ...

As with any performance of Zappa material, the rhythm section is required to do much of the heavy lifting—and drummer Ray Marchica and bassist Paul Adamy are up to the task. ...the mood is generally upbeat and the band can cook. [3 stars]”

– Mitch Myers, *DownBeat*, October 2006, Vol. 73, No. 10

“This is Palermo's second take on...the music of Frank Zappa. ... The title track gets a Dizzy-ish Afro-Cuban reading, while the opener 'RDNZL' gets a glistening Marty Paich treatment. Palermo's emphasis is less on Zappa's idiosyncrasies... His goal here seems to be to stress the jazz elements and potential of Zappa's music – and it works. 'Gumbo Variations' is down and dirty with bar walking tenor saxophone from guest Dave Riekenberg and screaming guitar wailing from Restivo over a pounding big band riff... The combination of 'Mom And Dad' and 'Oh No' pits Zappa's cynicism against his distrust of authority to poignant effect but best of all is the lovely 'Sleep Dirt' with hymnal soprano from Phil Chester. A fine album from a band it would be great to see over here.”

– Duncan Heining, *Jazzwise*, September 2006, Issue 101

“...With this album, Palermo's eighteen-piece ensemble... attempts to restate Zappa's compositions in a non-conventional jazz style that does succeed... The opening “RDNZL” is a spirited tune with spurts of fire, featuring a muscular solo by Palermo and nice accompaniment by trombonist Charles Gordon. ... My favorite item on this program has to be the classic title tune, which Palermo does a great job of transforming into a shoulder-moving Latin jazz salsa piece that swings... This album is clearly an unconventional, non-traditional big band recording with a message: pay homage to this legendary composer and rock star. Palermo's dedication, commitment and talent as an arranger serve to pull this off as a big band jazz album, albeit an unusual one.”

– Edward Blanco, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, September 17, 2006