

“Frank Zappa was wary of jazz. But after ditching...the Mothers of Invention, in 1969, he sought out musicians who were fluent in jazz to negotiate his intricate, demanding charts. ... With his internal radar tuned into Zappa’s zany frequency since middle school, Palermo and his assembly of 18 wayward sons and daughters prove they’ve mastered all the quirky complexities of the master’s music. ... Palermo has done his own creative thinking about song structure, dynamics, riffing, combining instruments and sections for an uncommonly appealing big band sound. ... Palermo presents a second disc of original compositions. All eight, plus non-original swing-fest “Moosh,” are triumphs of serious-minded orchestral jazz, with occasional whiffs of Palermo-style comedy. ... [4 of 5 stars]” —Frank-John Hadley, *Downbeat*, May 2014

“Ed Palermo’s righteous fixation on Frank Zappa...the saxophonist and arranger retools the late genius’ work for big band. This... double-CD...features Zappa music on disc one and Palermo’s own on the second. The Zappa half...add some choice nuggets to the ever-growing Ed-does-Frank canon. The Palermo half is just as good, in some ways better. ...

Palermo is nothing if not ambitious. He’s comfortable enough...to delve into a complex creation such as “Lumpy Gravy,” the theme from Zappa’s first fully realized orchestral work. And he’s also savvy enough to know to trim it and throw some funk at it—Ronnie Buttacavoli’s trumpet and Bill Straub’s tenor saxophone give a downtown edge to the piece that Zappa’s quite-serious original reading lacked.

Free to make his own statement and unbound by another composer’s ideas, Palermo takes greater risks on his own material on disc two. At times that means setting the big-band formula aside altogether, or at least swatting it around... the set-closing take on the Beatles’ “She’s So Heavy” (one of two non-Palermo tracks here) is monstrously good.”

- Jeff Tamarkin, *Jazz Times*, June 2014

“Jazz from heck. Ed Palermo has been arranging and performing the music of Frank Zappa with his 17-piece big band for about 30 years, and he keeps getting better at it. *Oh No! Not Jazz!*...consists of both a new album of ingeniously reimagined early Zappa material along with another disc’s worth of the saxophonist’s own inventive compositions. Napoleon Murphy Brock pops up in an extended “Inca Roads,”...”

- Richard Gehr, “Ear Crystals: The search for other world audio gems,” *Relix*, March 2014

“... Jazz purists may snivel at the idea of the late Mother Of Invention's music being reinterpreted as jazz sides but, fact is, Zappa's work is more conducive to jazz treatment than many of the pop sides that are being bandied about these days.

For this record, Palermo charts his musical expedition beyond covers to include a number of blithely titled, Zappian-inspired originals like "Let's Reproduce," "Nostalgia Revisited" and "Prelude To An Insult" ...

“There is a lot of humor, and I probably got a lot of that from Zappa,” Palermo says...

Humor notwithstanding, this record isn't a joke. Extending the big band concept from Duke Ellington through Zappa to the present day, Palermo's band knows it's way around the bandstand. ... Seriously recommended.”

- Michael Verity, *About.com: Jazz*, Feb. 24, 2014, jazz.about.com

“... This is utterly wonderful, in every sense of the word; wonderful in being just gorgeous music, and wonderful in the sense of being full of wonder. It is 2 discs of astonishing big band music, one devoted to the music of Frank Zappa and one featuring compositions written by Ed Palermo himself. His band is filled with master musicians and top-notch improvisers, who have the technical skills required to play these thorny, detailed and hugely musical charts.

Talk about ambitious. The first disc begins with...the most iconic of Zappa compositions, "Inca Roads." ...Napoleon Murphy Brock adds his vocals to the stew... Palermo transmutes this burner into a more swinging, fluid piece of music. Each of the Zappa songs is played in a manner different from the original. They...demonstrate new facets to each of the compositions. ...all seem to stand out. ... Palermo does a superb job of capturing the spirit and ethos of Frank Zappa, keeping the flame alive.

Disc 2 is all about Ed Palermo's own writing. The tone...differs from the Zappa, though the charts are no less complicated. ... All of this is a wonder. ... [Rating: 5 of 5 Stars]

- Dana Lawrence, *Sea of Tranquility*, February 14, 2014, www.seaoftranquility.org

“This album, their fourth of Zappa material, is as expansive as their hero, stretching to two CDs, taking in *Inca Roads*, *The Uncle Meat Variations*, *America Drinks And Goes Home*, *Lumpy Gravy*... *The Dog Breath Variations*.

Palermo doesn’t just play his own big band arrangements of Frank Zappa tunes, he writes his own in the spirit of the man. So *Let’s Reproduce* has the stacked horns and vibraphone that we expect from Frank, but also some violin and mandolin touches... The album finishes...with a revisit to Zappa’s re-working of The Beatles’ *She’s So Heavy*, Palermo taking its big band inclinations even further... “

- Peter Bacon, *The Jazzbreakfast*, November 26, 2014, www.thejazzbreakfast.com

“... *Oh No! Not Jazz!* a feisty double-CD release from Ed Palermo... is as surreal as the *Micros*, but in a way that is hectic and driven and madly inventive. The first CD consists of arrangements for big band of Frank Zappa’s orchestral music, and brilliantly apt they are, too. The music acquires a brassy, strutting edge...Zappa would surely have approved. ...Palermo’s own pieces on CD2...evokes John Zorn’s way of juxtaposing styles in disconcerting and invigorating ways. Why is the Doctor Barking? is a good example, with its entertaining combination of filmic tension (think Bernard Herrmann’s score for *North by North-West*) with the Roadrunner’s mad velocity.”

- Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*, October 7, 2014, www.telegraph.co.uk

“Oh yes it is! The title is a giveaway that Ed Palermo is a Frank Zappa fan and the first disc here is his fourth album of Zappa charts... CD2 is all Palermo and it’s one of the most exciting, irreverent and entertaining big bands I’ve heard for years.”

- Peter Bevan, *Northern Echo*, October 9, 2014

“...Palermo’s own compositions...are somewhat Zappa influenced yet...sound extremely original at the same time, pulling in a strong swing component working in a powerful orchestral jazz style, and pulling out all the stops. ...the dozen Palermo pieces...are the real icing on the cake here. But that in no way lessens the excellence of the arrangements of Zappa material on disc one; in fact, that they can both exist side by side complementing each other is a testament to Palermo’s brilliance as both a composer and arranger. ... a version of “*The Uncle Meat Variations*”...is every bit as impressive as the original from 1969, in fact...it’s better than the original. ... The five minute arrangement of “*Lumpy Gravy*” is a real surprise, breathing new life into what was probably one of Zappa’s weirdest endeavors. ...this is an outstanding package that underscores Palermo’s prowess as a composer, arranger, and bandleader. My highest Recommendation.” -

Peter Thelen, *Exposé*, March 11, 2014, www.expose.org

“... The first eight tracks of the double-CD are Ed’s big band arrangements of Zappa classics, ...era of 1966-1970. Included are very **impressive arrangements of “Inca Roads,”** featuring...**Napoleon Murphy Brock**, as well as a *notoriously difficult to play* **“Black Page #2.”** ...great solos are too many to mention! The second disc (tracks 9-19) offers up **original Palermo compositions...diverse, alive and vibrant...often transitioning...from intricate and complicating, to elegant and lush on the drop of a dime!** ...solos are magnificent and numerous, yet the compositions... still...stretch out and breathe. The themes and stories are...cleverly conveyed through the music. ...the music rides a fine line between tongue-in-cheek vamp and...serious music...like Frank Zappa, himself. ...*Oh No! Not Jazz!!* is simply full of wonderfully bright and innovative compositions, impeccable musicianship and mouth-dropping, killer solos throughout.

Released on Cuneiform Records, **the colorful CD packaging is great, complete with liner notes and some campy band-selfies!**”

- Joe Milliken, *Standing Room Only*, July 27, 2014, [www.standing-room-only.info](http://www.standing-room-only.info)

“... Ed Palermo has dedicated himself to the spirit of Zappa through arranging his music for a big band but has also created a substantial body of original work beautifully steeped in big band jazz.

The first of two discs on *Oh No! Not Jazz!!* is simply called *Zappa*. “Lumpy Gravy”... It’s a perfect combination of Zappa and Palermo’s big band smarts. **All of the tunes...have the same mix of discipline and abandon.** ...

The second disc, *Palermo*, opens with a tune by David Leone, a Basie-ish big band swinger... **There’s a wide range of moods throughout the Palermo set, with an almost manic array of colors and textures. The inspiration of Zappa thrives** in tunes like “Why is the Doctor Barking?” but it’s the leader’s skill in a jazz feel and the brilliance of the big band that shine here. **Think Zappa, the rants of Buddy Rich and late-period Beatles’ playfulness.”**

- Donald Elfman, *The New York City Jazz Record*, August 2014

“... The Ed Palermo Big Band have been exploring the music of Frank Zappa for the past couple of decades. The latest is *Oh No! Not Jazz!!*...a two-disc set with half devoted to Zappa compositions and the other to (primarily) Palermo’s own writing. ...**there’s a warm and regal bearing in the arrangements and playing.** There is humor in the writing...but of a more gentlemanly sort than the framing devices he likes to deploy. **The 18-piece band are capable of both rich enormity (“The Dog Breath Variations”) and supple quietude (“Little Umbrellas”).** **Palermo’s compositions stand nicely alongside Zappa’s, utilizing a similar love of precision overlaid with bursts of abandon, and all with a rich harmonic complexity and sly movement to the many horns.** ...”

- David Greenberger, *Metroland*, December 11, 2014

“... The first disc of this double CD finds the 18 piece ensemble tackling classics like ‘Dog Breath Variations’ and ‘The Black Page #2’ alongside a slew of tunes from the Mothers era. Disc two collects Palermo’s original work ...

Things get off to a good start with *Inca Roads* and take a further positive step when the...should-be legend Napoleon Murphy Brock takes to the stage. ... The arrangement of *Chunga’s Revenge* is also excellent, the big band bringing color and dynamic to the piece... **In many ways the EPBB is the best band you could possibly see if you are a Zappa aficionado. They don’t usually attempt the vocal elements and bring a freshness to works that more than warrant it. [Score: 5/5]**”- Jason Kennedy, *The Ear*, April 2014

“Ed Palermo's Big Band gives a double-dose of big-band jazz so good it's scary...

**On the Zappa compositions Ed performs his musical alchemy, preserving the integrity of the compositions while translating them into the voices of Big Band.** ...there's a special treat...the stunning "Inca Roads,"...Zappa alumnus Napoleon Murphy Brock on vocals. ...The title track from Zappa's *Chunga's Revenge* is sonically expanded with some full-bodied horn section work, while Katie Jacoby's fiery violin solo...evokes the tone of Don 'Sugarcane' Harris.

Zappa...asked..."Does humor belong in music?" His answer was obvious... On "America Drinks and Goes Home" Ed gives us a Sinatra-like character (performed by Mike James)... the lounge-lizard / band singer that can't...come to grips with the more esoteric arrangement he's trapped in. **Palermo's gang is flying and swinging and generally having a good time.** ...

With the exception of "Moosh" (David Leone) and "She's So Heavy" (Lennon & McCartney), the second disc is made up of Palermo originals... **Ed's music is whimsical and intricate...**and the 'Palermo disc' features wonderfully inventive soloing by Ed himself and various members of the band... **Bottom line: plenty of good playing, a good dose of humor, and not really scary at all. Unless Big Bands scare you, that is.”**

-Bert Saraco, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, February 1, 2014, [www.tollbooth.org](http://www.tollbooth.org)

“For years, Ed Palermo and his 18-piece orchestra have been performing and recording as one unit, working as flawlessly as if they all shared one conscious mind. Palermo has long been celebrated for his inspirational playing and amazingly inventive jazz arrangements of Frank Zappa compositions.”

-Nick Abitia, *Sound Colour Vibration*, Jan. 24, 2014, [www.soundcolourvibration.com](http://www.soundcolourvibration.com)

“...Ed Palermo and his big band have been a critical part of helping to revive and keep alive Zappa's music via Ed's very sympathetic and hip re-arrangements of Zappa music and the fine ensemble that grew around the fine idea.

...*Oh, No! Not Jazz!!*...has two CDs, one another excellent collection of Zappa big band rearrangements...**essential.** ...**the compositions are some of Frank's very best, pieces that give you Frank's melodic genius, the daring and the (for then) very complicated yet directly communicative sounds. It is a veritable best of...Frank's jazz-rock works: "Inca Roads", "The Uncle Meat Variations", "Little Umbrellas", the "Dog Breath Variations", the Theme from "Lumpy Gravy" and the "Black Page #2".** Then there is a hilarious Sinatra-like Las Vegas sleaze version of "America Drinks and Goes Home". **The re-arrangements are marvelous, the band tight as a drum, and they are peppered through with effective solos...** ... **the Zappa disk is essential listening if you don't know why Zappa is musically important.”**

- Grego Applegate Edwards, *GappleGate Music Review*, April 29, 2014

“Presenter picks for 2014... Jazztrack with Mal Stanley...#2. Recording (International): Ed Palermo Big Band - *Oh No! Not Jazz!!*”

- *ABC Radio Jazz*, Dec 19, 2014, [abcjazz.net.au](http://abcjazz.net.au)

“Music To Listen To Jazz By – Best of 2014... David Basskin [Best of list] ...*Oh No! Not Jazz!!* - Ed Palermo Big Band ...”

- *JAZZ.FM91*, [www.jazz.fm](http://www.jazz.fm)

“Welcome to ukvibe’s BEST JAZZ ALBUMS OF 2014 ...UKVIBE TOP TWENTY...”

17. The Ed Palermo big Band – Oh Not! notJazz! (Cuneiform) “A very special big band project” - *UK Vibe*, [ukvibe.org](http://ukvibe.org)

““Oh No! Not Jazz!!” is a fine double album. ...It’s a great selection, the arrangements are beautiful and the playing is excellent. ...this is the fourth album in which Ed Palermo and his band pay tribute to Frank Zappa. Each and everyone of these is essential listening. ... Disc two of the set is original Ed Palermo material. No Zappa references, but top notch swingin’ big band jazz. Nice. Very nice. **You definitely need to hear this.”**

- *United-Mutations*, March 9, 2014, [united-mutations.blogspot.com](http://united-mutations.blogspot.com)