

Postmodernism

Postmodernism

Definition:

“A reaction to intellectual traditions that attempt to explain the world using universal concepts such as Freudian models of the personality, Marxist theories of economics, or the cause-and-effect explanations used by historians. Postmodernism views life in the late twentieth century as a series of disconnected events, a smorgasbord of narratives or discourses that compete for attention.” (Anna Copeland)

Characteristics:

- Emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and seemingly random collages of different materials.
- Rejection of the distinction between “high” and “low” (popular) culture, both in the choice of materials and in the methods of displaying, distributing, and consuming art.
- Tendency toward reflexivity, or self-consciousness, about the production of the work of art, so that each piece calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed and consumed in particular ways.
- Characterized by irony, parody, kitsch, and playful or whimsical use of materials.
- Rejection of originality in favor of appropriation.

Modernism

- First half of 20th century: Composers (artists) questioned basic elements of music (art)—e.g., pitch, rhythm, timbre—yet still to traditional ends.
- After 1945: Composers (artists) questioned larger issues—e.g., perception, structural organization of time, teleology—and the entire meaning of “music” (“art”).

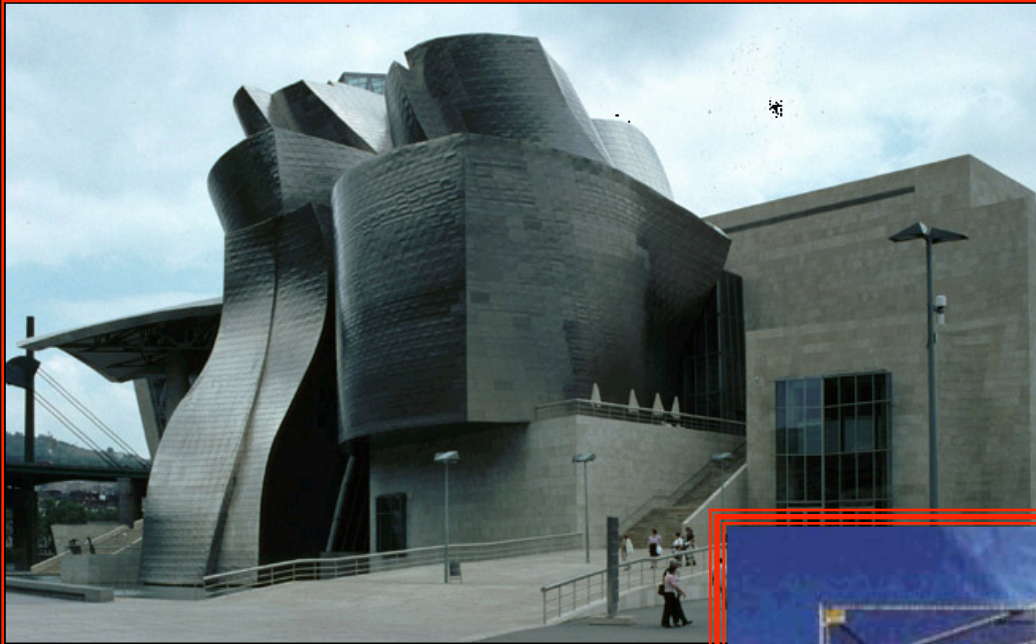


▲ Jackson Pollock: *Convergence* (1952)



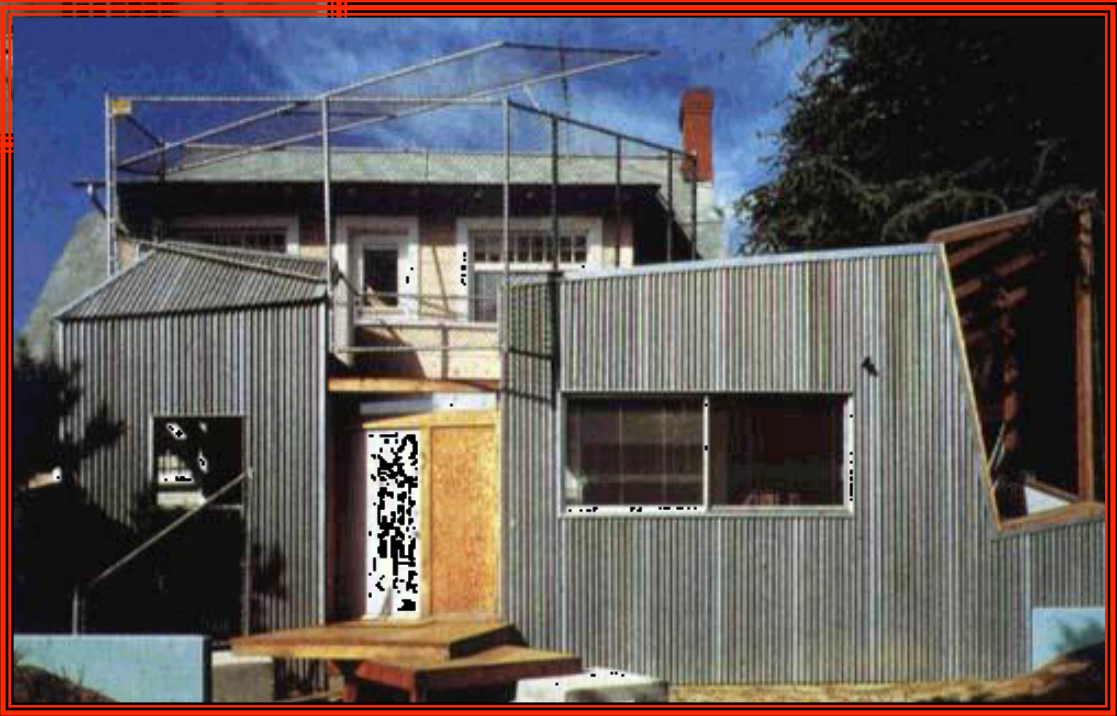
▲ Mies van der Rohe & Philip Johnson: *Seagram Building*
New York (1954-58)

Postmodernism: Architecture



◀ Frank Gehry:
Guggenheim Museum (1997);
Bilbao, Spain.

▶ Frank Gehry:
Gehry House (1978);
Santa Monica, California.



Postmodernism: Art

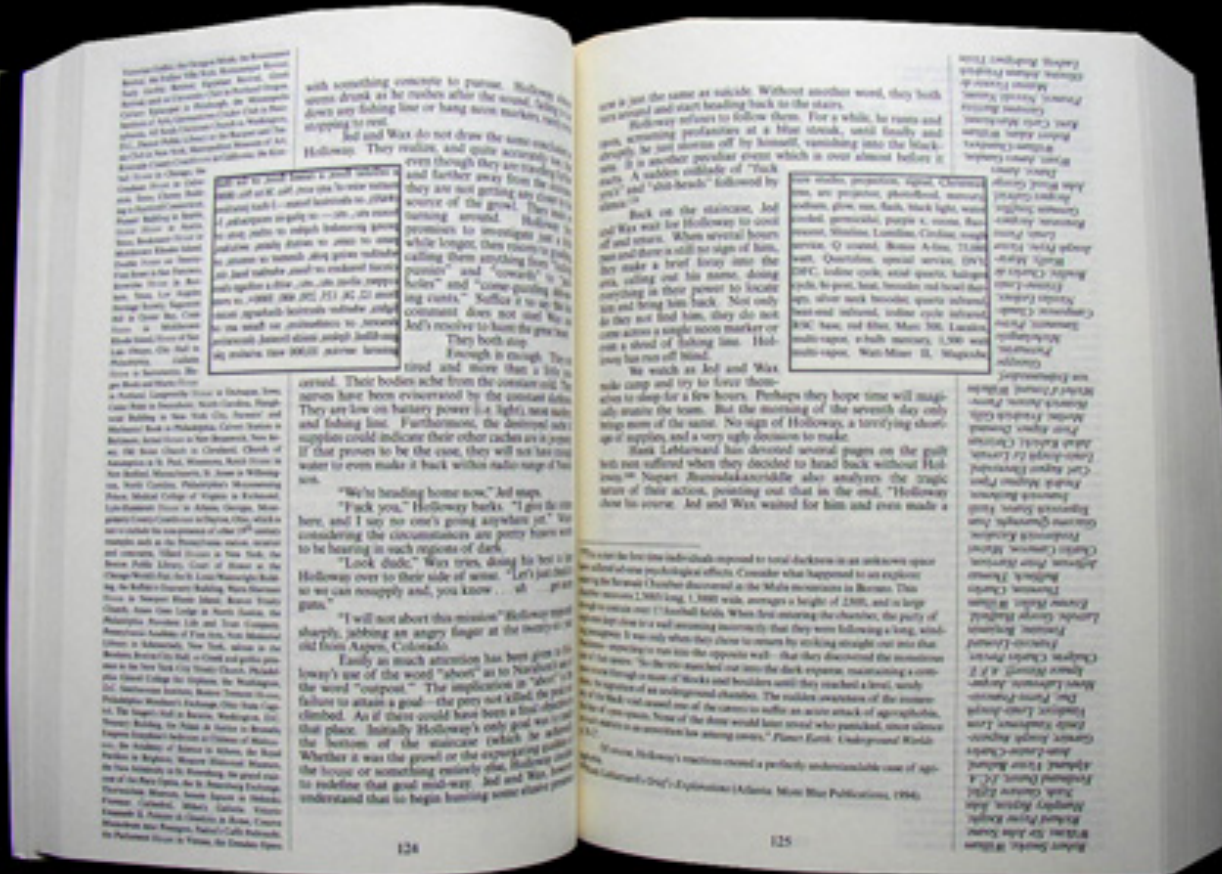


▲ Jeff Koons: *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988); painted ceramic.

▶ Jeff Koons: *Rabbit* (1986); stainless steel.



Postmodernism: Literature



Mark Z. Danielewski: *House of Leaves* (2000)

Postmodernism

Musical Terminology

- Third Stream
- Eclecticism
- Quotation
- Collage
- Crossover

Postmodernism

Precedents



George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Duke Ellington (1899-1974)



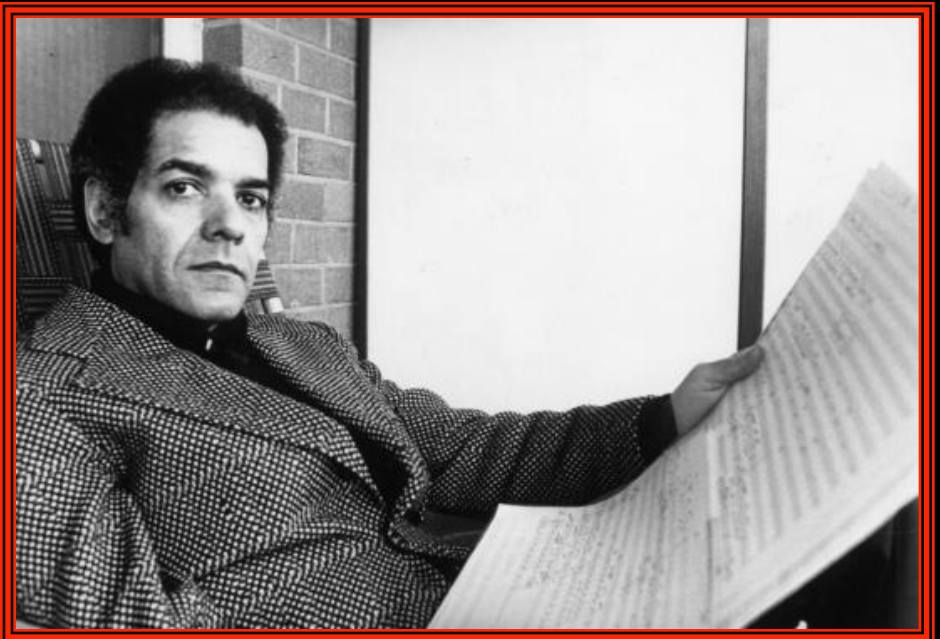
Postmodernism

Third Stream



Charles Mingus (1922-1979)

Gunther Schuller (b.1925)



George Russell (1923-2009)



Postmodernism

Free Jazz



Anthony Braxton (b.1945)

Ornette Coleman (b.1930)



Cecil Taylor (b.1929)



Postmodernism

Progressive Rock



Frank Zappa (1940-1993)



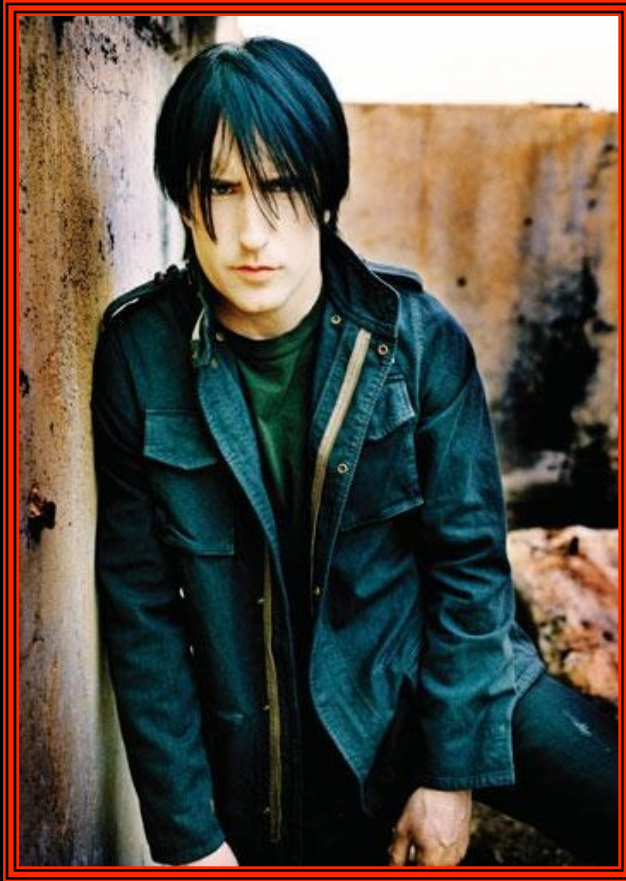
Brian Eno (b.1948)



Laurie Anderson (b.1947)

Postmodernism

Alt-rock, Electronica



Trent Reznor (b.1965)

Aphex Twin
(Richard D. James) (b.1971)



Björk (b.1965)

Thom Yorke (b.1968)



Postmodernism

Bang on a Can (1987-)



Julia Wolfe (b. 1958)

David Lang (b. 1957)

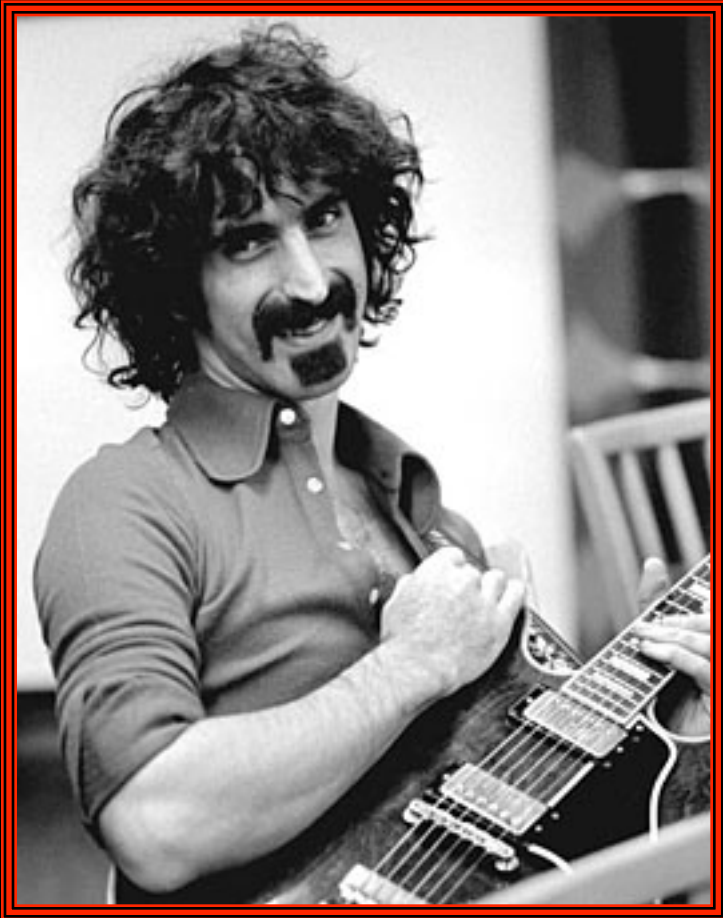
Michael Gordon (b. 1956)

Tell Me Everything (1994)—orchestra 🗣️

Steam (1995)—mixed chamber ensemble
with Partch instruments 🗣️



Postmodernism

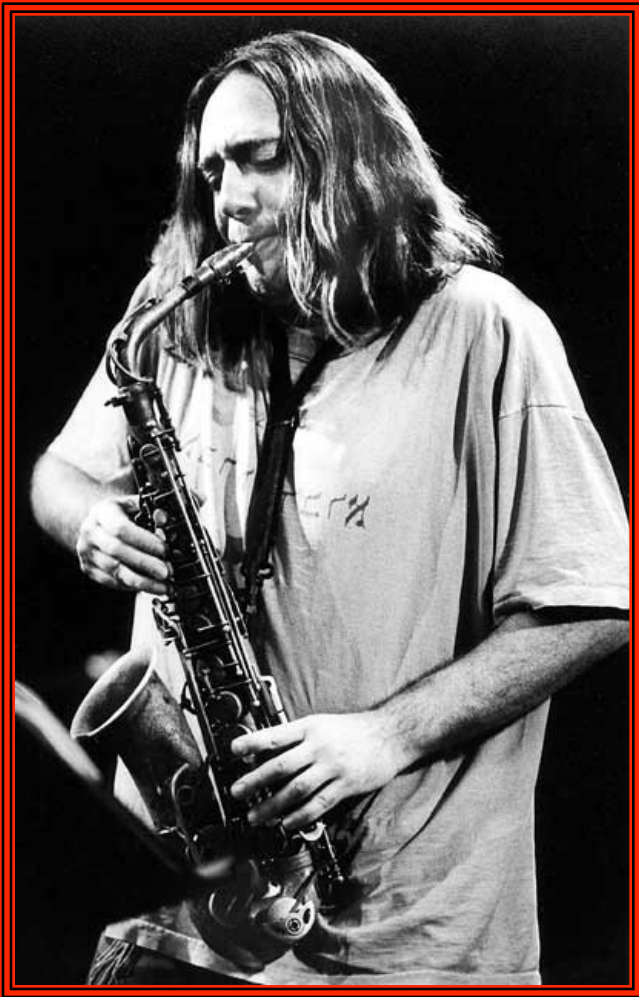


Frank Zappa (1940-1993)

John Zorn (b. 1953)



John Zorn: Musical Characteristics



- Admittedly short attention span results in kaleidoscopic, fast-paced flow of information characterized by sharp contrasts, block changes, unusual juxtapositions, instrumental virtuosity.
- Influenced by composer-inventors Charles Ives, John Cage, and Harry Partch, as well as Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen, Kagel, the cartoon music of Carl Stalling, and jazz idols Anthony Braxton, Ornette Coleman, Jimmy Giuffre and Roscoe Mitchell.
- Music reflects the influence of mass media and popular culture, primarily through television and an immense record collection
- Extra-musical influences include Japanese culture, sado-masochism, and Jewish tradition.

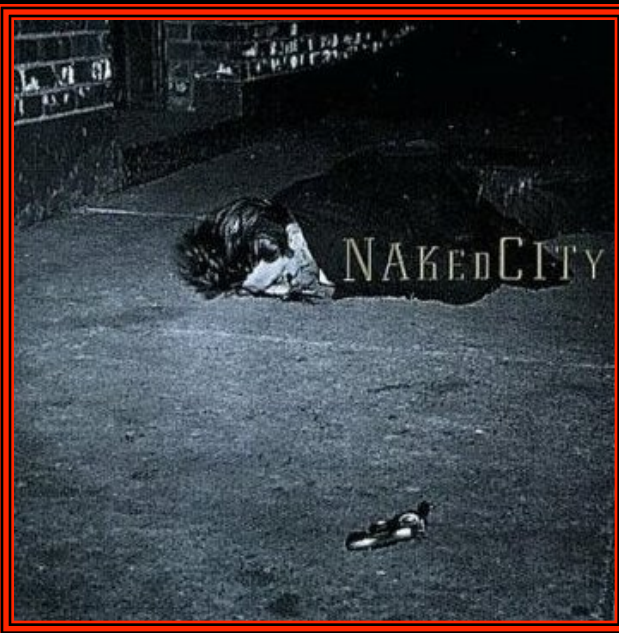
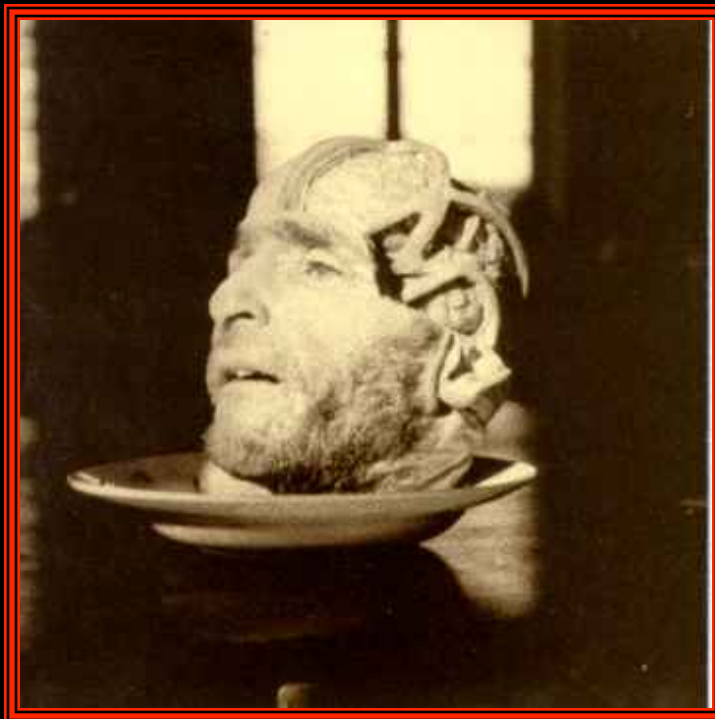
John Zorn: Musical Techniques



- **Musical moments:** small event-units that may be considered little pieces in and of themselves are combined to form the building blocks of a mosaic structure.
- **Game theory:** complex systems used to harness improvisors within flexible compositional formats.
- **File-card composition:** musical ideas are jotted down on filecards, which are sorted and arranged to create the musical “score.”

VIDEO

John Zorn: Album Artwork



ROAD RUNNER

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[illegible]

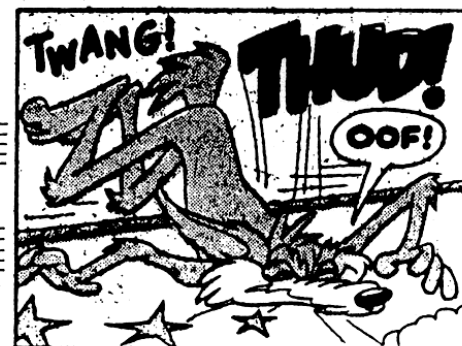
John Zorn: *Road Runner* (1985)

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JAZZ-HOCK and sound

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8b4



105 DANCE SECTION

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F7	Cm	Am	Cm	Gm
MAMBO	POLKA	WALTZ	FREE IMPAN	IRISH SIG
			JAZZ TANGO	

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POSSIBLE
KNOWN
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of the
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John Zorn: *Road Runner* (1985)

SCALE WARS

14 RH *a bit faster - various tempos + spasmodic*

14 LH *VARIOUS TEMPO*

15 *LAUGHING*

16 *TURN PAGE!*

16 *KNOW!*

16 *UH-OH!*

16 *LH LOW NOODLING*

16 *OUT OF TEMPO*

18 *AIR BUTTON*

18 *moding*

20 *IMPROVISE > RH CONVERSATION BETWEEN HIGH + LOW*

22 *Rocking Palm Glim.*

22 *LH VERY FAST QUOTE*




22 *TRIANGLE SHAKE + PALM NOW*

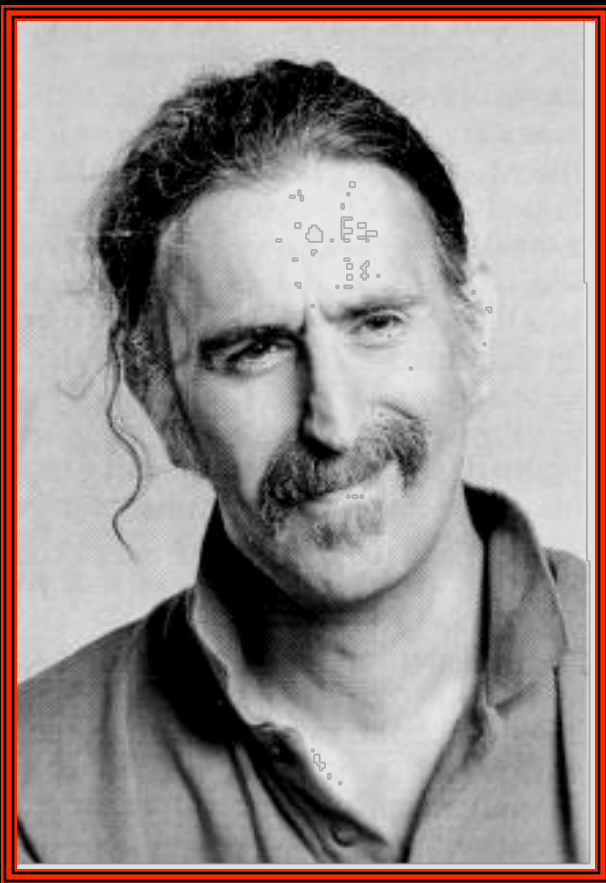
22 *very fast again*

23 *CLUSTERS GLASSES, SMEARS*

23 *LAUGHING*

23 *ff sfz DISTORTING*

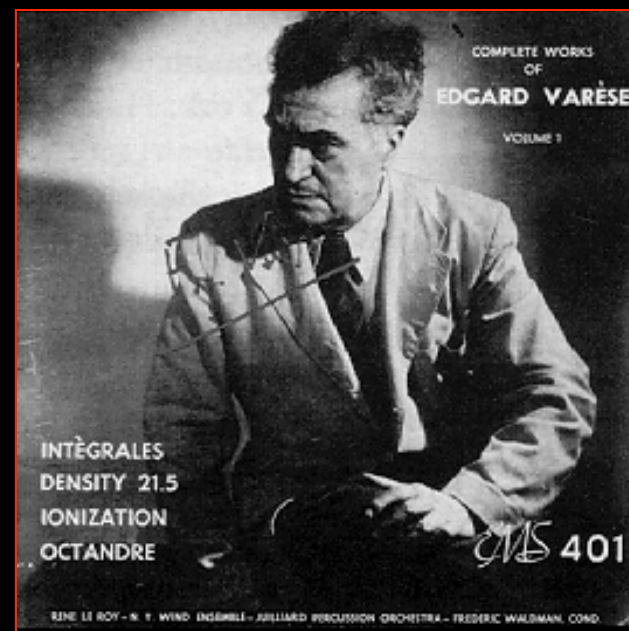




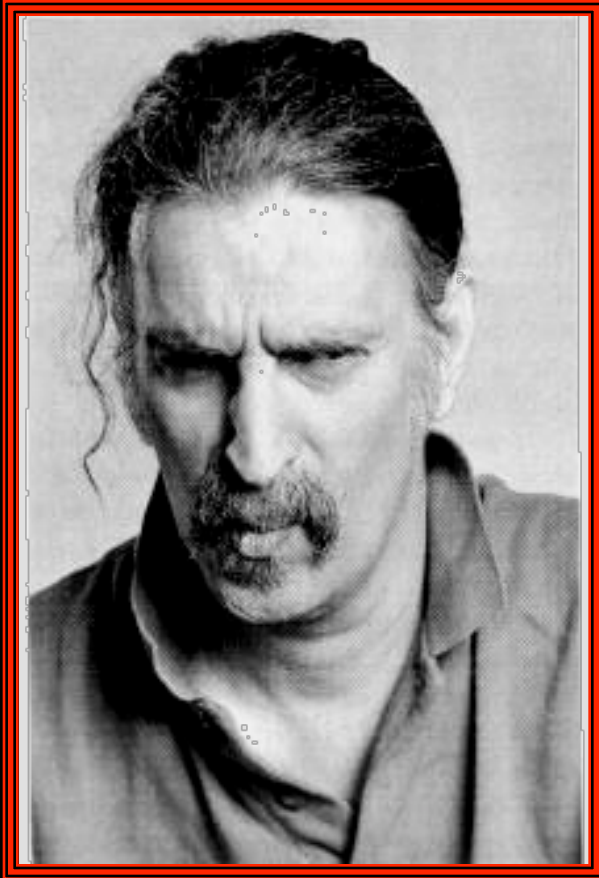


Frank Zappa: Biographical Sketch

- Born December 21, 1940 in Baltimore, Maryland; moves to Southern California in the early 1950s.
- Begins playing drums at age 12 and later guitar; early interest in Rhythm & Blues (Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Guitar Slim, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, et al).
- Discovers the music of Edgar Varèse as a teenager, which has a profound impact on him; later seeks out music by other contemporary classical composers, such as Stravinsky, Webern, and Bartók.

- Plays in various R & B bands throughout high school and after graduation; drops out of Chaffey Junior College during first year.
- Opens Studio Z; arrested following vice squad bust, making him ineligible for military service.



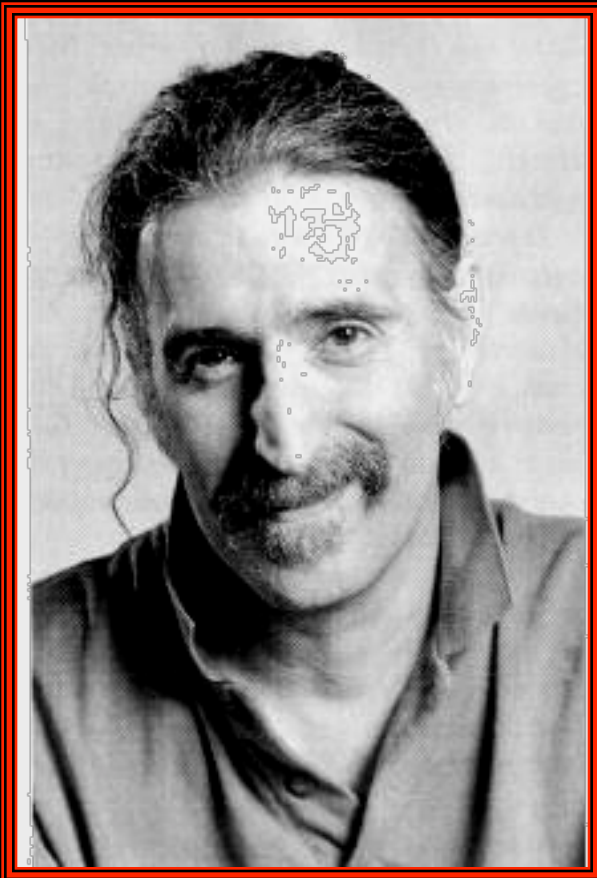


Frank Zappa: Biographical Sketch

- Forms original “Mothers of Invention” band in 1964; records first album (*Freak Out!*) in 1966.
- Marries Gail Sloatman in 1967; four children: Moon Unit, Dweezil, Ahmet, and Diva.
- First major performance of orchestral works when MOI performs with Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at UCLA’s Pauley Pavilion in 1970.

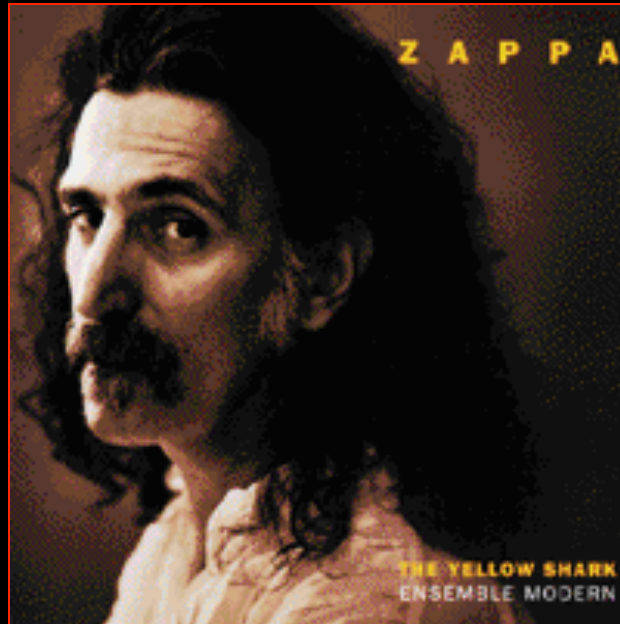
- Forms several bands throughout the 1970s, emphasizing both technical virtuosity and improvisational prowess.
- Acquires Synclavier in the early 1980s, allowing him to accurately realize his complex scores.





Frank Zappa: Biographical Sketch

- Performances and recording of *The Perfect Stranger* by Pierre Boulez and the Ensemble Intercontemporain in 1984.



VIDEO

- Ensemble Modern commissions *The Yellow Shark* in early 1990s.
- Dies of prostate cancer on December 5, 1993, just short of his 53rd birthday.

