

200 Motels shows Zappa's versatility

By JACK FLEISCHMANN

I have a theory about Frank Zappa. If Timothy Leary is the Ghandi of our era, then Frank Zappa is the Sigmund Freud.

In his unique search for the ultimate explanation, Zappa has directed a movie that could be the most crucial statement ever made about the great mythical 21st Century. When Freud got the idea that man was headed for oblivion and that it all had to do with sexual deviancy, Zappa heard him. In 200 Motels, Zappa has pin-pointed our obsession with cocks, pricks, doodles and tits. He fills the screen with Bruce Palmer's overwhelming zap-colour visuals, adds the screaming insanity of his musical sirens and the absurdity of a phallic vacuum cleaner and a perverted aviator. It isn't coincidence that you feel totally exhausted by the end.

When Zappa rode from the airport to his hotel in downtown Vancouver on the back of a city garbage truck, he was telling us about our propensity for creating filth. When he took on the entire Los Angeles Symphony at the Hollywood Bowl in a contest for creating the loudest noise, he was showing us that the spirit of competition pervades even the holy realm of classical music. It

wasn't just another Zappa circus for the plebians.

The entire staging of the film, except for a short cartoon strip in the middle, goes on in a T.V. studio. Much of the film was originally video-taped. The film begins during a T.V. quiz show. Theodore Bikel, the host, raises the puritan preacher-like naivete of the announcer to the used car salesman reality that it is. He also plays the nightclub owner, the delivery boy and the devil. It is unfortunate that Bikel has more talent in his little finger than Ringo Starr has in his entire body because Bikel is so good in bringing out common perversity that Starr is dwarfed and drowns in his inability to cope with the equally important character of Frank Zappa's alter ego. Maybe that's good counterpoint.

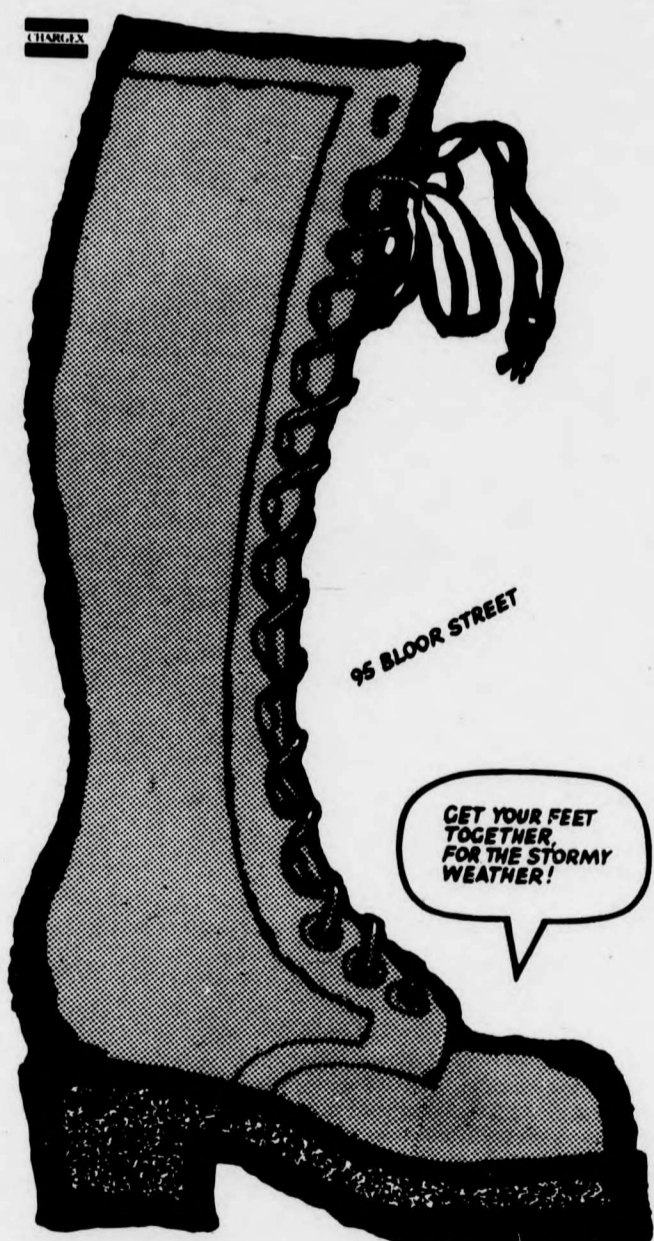
Of all the different sets: The quiz show, the motel room, the stage, the fake town of Centreville, the latter best portrays Zappa's theory of the lowest common denominator. 200 Motels is the logical extension of Michael Snow's wavelength in cinematic theory. Snow simply says that all film should not be physically absorbing. The long sequence of distorted colour, the droning noise, the sets and the absurdity of character are esthetically repulsive.

CULTURAL BRIEFS

Music by young artists good

The opening night of the series by Young Canadian Performers at the St. Lawrence Centre For The Arts was surprisingly good. Claude Savard (Pianist), replaced Roxolan Roslak (Soprano), who was ill with a cold; Vladimir Orloff (Cello), accompanied by George Brough (Piano), performed as announced.

It is not really necessary to detail various aspects of the performances. It is sufficient to state that the talent displayed was well above what might be expected from a quick look at the program. If the quality of the work presented remains the same or improves, then the series will truly be worthwhile.



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