

Mothers to Zap Detroit

Seymour Glass

1967

In the past month Detroit area music-lovers have had the opportunity to attend performances of the Jefferson Airplane, the Cream, Donovan, the Who, and Ravi Shankar. The biggest threat is to come December 1, when the MOTHERS OF INVENTION invade our hallowed Civic Center's Ford Auditorium. Detroit will never be the same.

The Mothers are undefinable. Their influences include, so they tell us: Salvador Dali, Edgar Varese, Sabu, Sabucus, the Marx Brothers, Eric Satie, Rimbaud, Jules Feiffer, Marvin Belli, Rosemarie DeCamp, Roland Kirk, James Joyce, Molly Bee, and Igor Stravinsky. When you see them you will know that they are serious. They put on a show that is unique in American music today.

First, the Mothers are musicians. Frank Zappa, leader and most repellent Mother, is considered by musicians a genius in the Brian Wilson-Paul McCartney class.

Bunk Gardner, who plays flute, clarinet, saxophone and trumpet has legitimately been compared to Archie Shepp.

Ray Collins, sometimes lead singer, has been singing rhythm and blues for twelve years.

Jim Black, former-Detroit bartender, sings soprano and loves to mimic late '50s R&B stage gestures and "sha-bop sha-bops".

Their entourage usually includes four or five other polished musicians who travel with kettle drums, tympanies, organ, piano, a few guitars and two gongs.

Zappa, who writes and arranges all their material has an avant-garde classical music and modern jazz background. He has written a symphony and a serious "Ballet for Susie Cream Cheese." Zappa conducts the group by elaborate body motion signals. He might jump in the air and everything stops suddenly or move an elbow to signal the beginning of a flute solo.

On stage the Mothers combine their serious music with an almost vaudeville show, which at times seems like a mad scene from a Marx Brothers movie. They most enjoy, or so it seems, putting down "high school culture," the top-40 and the audience. Zappa's closing message to tourists at the Hollywood Whiskey A Go Go in December '65 was: "If your children ever find out how lame you really are, they'll murder you in your sleep." I saw them in New York and Zappa convened the clan with "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" followed by a Moetown blast, infinitely more entertaining than Diane, Flo and Laverne. Zappa and company, during the tunes, make obscene gestures to me and fart into the mike.

Often members of the audience are called up on stage to 'help out'. Once one such volunteer did a fifteen minute "Louie, Louie" solo with the Mothers backing. Once on stage the Mothers are absolutely unpredictable and never fail to put on a good show. Their three albums certainly do not give a proper perspective—the Mothers must be seen.

Tickets for the show, a BFD production, are priced at \$2.50 and \$3.50 and are available at Hudson's, Grinnell's and Mixed Media or by mail at Ford Auditorium 20 E. Jefferson, Detroit.

fifth Estate

Seymour Glass
Mothers to Zap Detroit
1967

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/42-november-15-30-1967/mothers-to-zap-detroit>
Fifth Estate #42, November 15-30, 1967

[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fifthestate.org)