

Frank Zappa "The Central Scrutinizer"

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Act I

PRELUDE

Desperate nerds in high offices all over the world have been known to enact the most disgusting pieces of legislation in order to win votes (or, in places where they don't get to vote, to control unwanted forms of mass behavior). Environmental laws were not passed to protect our air and water... they were passed to get votes. Seasonal anti-smut campaigns are not conducted to rid our communities of moral rot...they are conducted to give an aura of saintliness to the office-seekers who demand them. If a few key phrases are thrown into any speech (as the expert advisors explain to these various heads of state) votes will roll in, bucks will roll in, and, most importantly, power will be maintained by the groovy guy (or gal) who gets the most media coverage for his sleaze. Naturally, his friends in various businesses will do okay too. All governments perpetuate themselves through the daily commission of act which a rational person might find to be stupid or dangerous (or both). Naturally, our government is no exception... for instance, if the President (any one of them) went on TV and sat there with the flag in the background (or maybe a rustic scene on a little backdrop, plus the flag) and stared sincerely into the camera and told everybody that all energy problems and all inflationary problems had been traced to and could be solved by the abolition of MUSIC, chances are that most

people would believe him and think that the illegalization of this obnoxious form of noise pollution would be a small price to pay for the chance to buy gas like the good ol' days. No way? Never happen? Records are made out of oil. All those big rock shows go from town to town in fuel-gobbling 45 foot trucks...and when they get there, they use up enormous amounts of electrical energy with their lights, their amplifiers, their PA systems...their smoke machines. And all those synthesizers...look at all the plastic they got in 'em...and the guitar picks...you name it...

JOE'S GARAGE is a stupid story about how the government is going to try to do away with music (a prime cause of unwanted mass behavior! It's sort of like a really cheap kind of high school play...the way it might have been done 20 years ago, with all the sets made out of cardboard boxes and poster paint. It's also like those lectures that local narks used to give (where they show you a display of all the different ways you can get wasted, with the pills leading to the weed leading to the needle, etc., etc.). If the plot of the story seems just a little bit preposterous, and if the idea of The Central Scrutinizer enforcing laws that haven't been passed yet makes you giggle, just be glad you don't live in one of the cheerful little countries where, at this very moment, music is either severely restricted...or, as it is in Iran, totally illegal.

SCENE ONE

ENTRANCE OF THE CENTRAL SCRUTINIZER

Sometimes when you're not looking he just sneaks up on you. He looks like a cheap sort of flying saucer about five feet across with a snout-like megaphone apparatus in the front with two big eyes mounted like Appletons with miniature motorized frowning chrome eyebrows over them. Along the side of his disc-like body are several sets of stupid looking headers and exhaust hoses which apparently propel him and punctuate his dialogue with horrible smelling smoke rings. In the middle of his head we can see an airport wind sock and constantly twirling

anemometer. The bottom of him has a landing light and three spoked wheels. In spite of all this, it is obvious that the way he really gets around is by being dangled from place to place by a union guy with a dark green shirt up in the roof who is eating a sandwich (pieces of which drop off every once in a while and lodge themselves near the hole where they put the oil in that makes the cheap smoke). He hovers into view and speaks to us thusly...

CENTRAL SCRUTINIZER:

This is the CENTRAL SCRUTINIZER...it is my responsibility to enforce all the laws that haven't been passed yet. It is also my responsibility to alert each and every one of you to the potential consequences of various ordinary everyday activities you might be performing which could eventually lead to The Death Penalty (or affect your parents' credit rating). Our criminal institutions are full of little creeps like you who do wrong things... and many of them were driven to these crimes by a horrible force called MUSIC! Our studies have shown that this horrible force is so dangerous to society at large that laws are being drawn up at this very moment to stop it forever! Cruel and inhuman punishments are being carefully described in tiny paragraphs so they won't conflict with the Constitution (which, itself, is being modified in order to accommodate THE FUTURE). I bring you now a special presentation to show what can happen to you if you choose a career in MUSIC . . . The WHITE ZONE is for loading and unloading only. . . if you have to load or unload, go to the WHITE ZONE... you 'll love it... it 's a way of life . . . This is the CENTRAL SCRUTINIZER...The WHITE ZONE is for loading and unloading only... (etc.)

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