

Morrison Van

"The Dead Girls Of London"

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Zappa/Shankar

Do you see what they are
Do you hear what they say
People it is sad but true
They're dressed really stupid
But they think they're O.K.
And they got no use for you
The dead girls of London
Why do they act that way?

Maybe it's the water, mama
Maybe it's the tea
Maybe it's the way they was raised
Maybe it's the stuff what they read in the papers
Keeps them lookin' sorta half in a daze
Well the dead girls of London
Why do they act that way?

We're the dead girls of London
We thinks we are fine
We ain't hittin' on nothin'
But the boutique frame of mind

You see 'em dancing at the disco every night
Like a bunch of little robot queens
Making little noises full of fake delight
But they're really just so full of beans
The dead girls of London
Why do they act that way?

We're the dead girls of London
We thinks we are fine
We ain't hittin' on nothin'
But the boutique frame of mind

Boutique frame of mind
Gee I like your pants
Boutique frame of mind
Gee I like your pants
Boutique frame of mind
Gee I like your pants

Glossary entry for
Zappa, Frank

There was once an abortive collaboration between Frank Zappa and Van, as recounted in the following contribution by Dave LePine:

Frank Zappa had been under dubious contract with Warner Brothers at one time, and he had an album nearly ready for release. He was actually 'between' contracts, and another record company had made test-pressings of this material. Warner Brothers sued the new record company, and out of frustration, Zappa played the entire album on the air of an FM radio station. I think this was in the late 70's, but I don't exactly recall.

In any case, the first time I heard the recording, I knew it was Van singing the first song on the album - Dead Girls Of London. I know Van was on Warner Brothers at the time - maybe this was part of his contractual obligation. It's a strange thought to have Van on a Zappa album, but he does have a sense of humor....

The album was intended to be titled Leatherette, and may have been released by his own record company much more recently. Much of the material showed up on Sheik Yerbouti, but without Van. (Arthur Siegel notes that Dead Girls Of London was re-recorded and released on an album produced by Zappa for L.Shankar, Touch Me There, in 1979. Van isn't on that album.)

Apparently the song has appeared on at least one Van (vinyl) boot: Caledonian Impressions (Studio outtakes) and at least one Zappa boot: Another Cheap Aroma. One list member describes it as definitely the toughest song I've heard [Van] do. It's to my judgement much more rock & roll than anything else. It has a loud/significant female vocal backing group and a screaming solo guitar unheard of elsewhere (in Van's production)

Biffy the Elephant Shrew clarifies the above somewhat: The legendary album Zappa played on the radio, and which was indeed recently released by Rykodisc, was actually called Lther, and did not contain Dead Girls Of London or any other Van Morrison involvement (see my web site devoted to this album at Leatherette is a bootleg containing the material from Lther that was not released on the DiscReet albums (see that web site),

plus Dead Girls Of London and some interviews; that's where the confusion is coming from.

The 1979 Touch Me There Zappa album is the album Dead Girls Of London was recorded for in the first place. It was originally recorded with Van, but Warner Brothers, then in the middle of an acrimonious lawsuit with Zappa, refused permission to release this version. Zappa then replaced Van's vocal with his own for the released version. (Same backing track, though.)

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