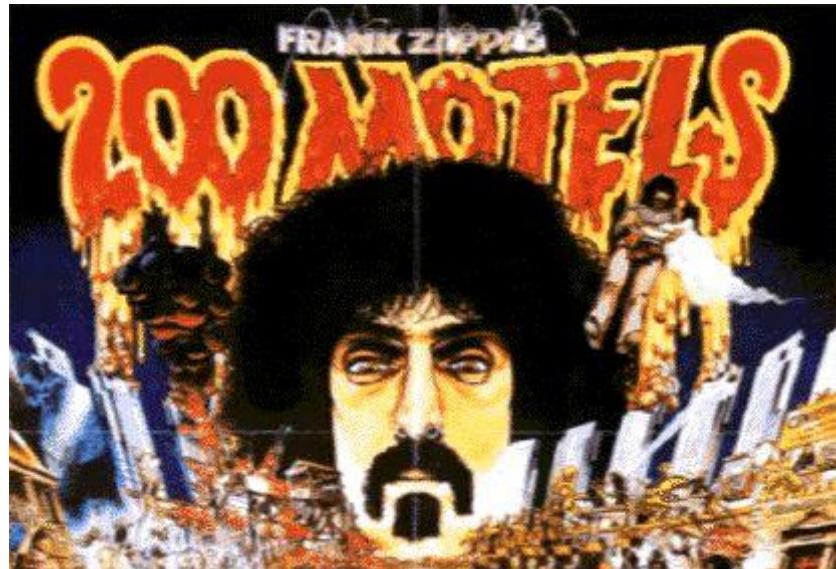


NB: La pagina è vecchia e si stenta a raggiungerla.
Questo è il testo, molto interessante, che ho salvato.

Understanding



200 MOTELS

You may like the movie or not. You may like the album or not. But **200 Motels** was certainly a major event in Zappa's career.

It's not an easy film to understand. It's full of "secret" clues that only fans can figure out - and we will decipher most of them here.

200 Motels is not just a movie. It's a whole concept that involves the music, the filming event, the characters, etc. It's about **LIFE ON THE ROAD**, and has a lot of **CONCEPTUAL CONTINUITY (CC)** in it.

This was Frank Zappa's first length-feature film. He had a lot of troubles because of it. First, he had to stick to the budget. He could not include the complete script as he planned it. In the middle of the shooting he fought with the director **Tony Palmer**, who left.

When he tried to perform the play live at the Royal Albert Hall, he was banned because of the lyrics and the concert was canceled. He sued the Albert Hall, but the authorities fight back and he wound up losing under obscenity charges.

Anyway, Zappa fulfilled unless two goals with this picture: to release a movie (after the ill-fated *Uncle Meat* and *Burnt Weeny Sandwich* projects), and to work with a full orchestra.

THE MUSIC

1970 was a breaking point in Zappa's music. First (in 1969) he disbanded **The Mothers of Invention** and released a masterpiece solo album, *Hot Rats*. Then, he returned with a new Mothers line-up and a different musical and lyrical concept. His music sort of turned to blues and rock & roll, with a lot of guitar playing and wide vocal arrangements. On the other hand, his lyrics switched to more mundane topics: groupies, touring, road food, casual sex, etc. -leaving the political-social satire aside.

Nonetheless, his previous reputation among critics remain intact, thus keeping the high press exposure (especially in Europe -with the years, he will eventually lose it).

These new topics (groupies and life on the road) obsessed Zappa in those days, as his following releases proved: *Chunga's Revenge*, *Fillmore East*, *200 Motels* & *Just Another Band from LA*. Zappa even planned to release a book about groupies (*The Groupie Papers*), which he never did.

THE MOVIE

In the midst of all his activities, Zappa managed to write and produce his first major movie.

It was photographed at **Pinewood Studios**, outside London, England, in 1970 in seven 8-hour days. It was edited in eleven 10-hour days. Of the original script, only one third (1/3) was actually filmed.

It was the first feature-length movie to be shot on VIDEO TAPE and later transferred to 35mm Technicolor film. According to FZ "it set the standards for the most advanced video techniques of its time".

The music was recorded live during performance, except "Penis Dimension". It was composed in a 5-year period mostly in motel or hotel rooms while touring.

The movie and the album were released through **United Artists**.

The total cost of the movie was \$679.000. - The original master video tapes were later sold as used tape for \$4000 (American dollars) to "balance the budget" by producer **Jerry Goode**. This way, the master and all the unused scenes were lost forever.

(For more details please refer to the CD booklet).

THE CAST

Larry the Dwarf	Ringo Starr (<i>Beatles' drummer</i>)
Rance Muhammitz (the devil)	Theodore Bikel (<i>Jewish singer and actor</i>)
The Hot Nun	Keith Moon (<i>The Who's drummer</i>)
Lonesome Cowboy Burt	Jimmy Carl Black (<i>The Mothers of Invention original drummer</i>)
Jeff	Martin Lickert (<i>see below</i>)
The Industrial Vacuum Cleaner	Dick Barber (<i>The Mothers road manager</i>)
Rock & Roll Interviewer	Pamella Miller (<i>see below</i>)
Themselves	Don Preston, Motorhead Sheerwood, Mark Volman, Howard Kaylan (<i>Musicians -see below</i>)
Groupies	Miss Lucy Offerall, Miss Janet Neville (<i>groupies, see below</i>)
The perverted drummer	Aynsley Dunbar (<i>Mothers' drummer</i>)

Martin Lickert: his character, **Jeff**, was originally written for **Jeff Simmons**, The Mothers' bass player. Jeff (in the story) is a musician that tired of playing "Zappa's comedy music" decides to quit the group. It so happens that that was what actually happened in reality: Simmons quit the group unhappy with his part in the movie just before the shooting began! **Noel Redding** (bass player for Jimi Hendrix) audition for the part, but later English actor **Wilfrid Brambell** (who played the part of Paul McCartney's grandfather in *A Hard Day's Night*) got the job. But the old actor quit as well, somewhat not convinced with this whole madness. Desperate, Zappa was thinking for a new replacement until someone suggested **Martin Lickert**, who at the time was **Ringo Starr's** chauffeur. By chance, Lickert happened to play some bass. (Nowadays, he is a barrister in London).

Pamela Miller: perhaps the ultimate groupie, the most famous of them all. She used to work at Zappa's house as nanny for Moon and Dweezil. As **Miss Pamela** she was a member of the **GTO's**, the girl group that Zappa produced. As **Pamela des Barres** (her married name) she wrote two books about her life with famous musicians (the first one, *I'm with the Band* is recommended). She has her own page, too.

Lucy Offerall: another groupie that worked as nanny for the Zappa kids. As **Miss Lucy** she was also a member of the **GTO's**. (*Offerall* is obviously a nickname).

Janet Neville: As **Janet Neville-Ferguson** you can hear her singing on *The Grand Wazoo*.

As **Howard Kaylan** explains in *The True Story of 200 Motels* video, "he plays a version of himself as Frank sees him". It so happens with **Don Preston** and **Mark Volman**.

THE STORY

Basically, the story IS ABOUT HOW TOURING CAN MAKE YOU CRAZY and ABOUT HOW EVERYBODY IN THE MOTHERS ALWAYS WANTED TO QUIT THE GROUP AND "PLAY REAL MUSIC".

The plot was written after actual facts in The Mother's everyday life.

The movie is an absolute example of Zappa's Conceptual Continuity (CC):

Ahead of Their Time: on this album you can hear the original **Mothers** live in London in 1968. **Don Preston** plays a scientist that turns into a "monster" when drinking a special potion. **Jimmy Carl Black** plays a musician that wants to quit to "play real music, became a rock and roll star and get laid". Both events (most noteworthy Preston's act) are also included in the *Uncle Meat* movie. **Chunga's Revenge:** among several songs with "life on the road" references ("Road Ladies", "Would you go all the way?", "Rudy wants to buy yez a drink") on the inner sleeve you find **CHUNGA**, the Gypsy mutant industrial vacuum cleaner. **Fillmore East:** this album deals a lot with groupies ("What kind of girls do you think we are?", "Bwana Dik", "Latex Solar Beef", "Do you like my new car?"). The latter is also known as "**The Goupie Routine**", and was on the original movie script. "The Mud Shark" is a real story about a girl-groupie performing sex with a shark as told by members of **Vanilla Fudge**.



THE PLOT

The movie begins with **Larry the Dwarf (Ringo Starr)** "dressed like Frank Zappa" lowered down on TV in front of **Rance**

Muhammitz (the devil) by a wire connected to a leather harness with the mission (assigned by **FZ**) to insert a lamp into the reproductive orifice of a lady harpist (a **nun**performed by **Keith Moon**).

You hear the voice of **FZ** saying: "touring can make you crazy, ladies and gentleman, that's what **200 Motels** is all about". Then the **Mothers** perform "Mystery Roach".

Then **Muhammitz** hands a hamburger as requested by **Mark Volman (Flo)** but **Martin Lickert** grabs it instead. The devil demands him to sign for it in blood. He later explains to the group what they are supposed to make in the film. **Motorhead Sherwood** meets **Chunga**, the industrial vacuum cleaner, and falls in love (CC). **Jimmy Carl Black** claims that he only cares for two things: "beer, and when is he going to get paid"

(CC: *Uncle Meat* CD).



In the meantime, a rock and roll interviewer for an imaginary rock & roll newspaper in San Francisco (performed by **Pamela Miller**, a real life groupie) writes everything down since she finds that the story about the abnormal relationship between **Motorhead** and the vacuum cleaner "would be great".

Now in the hotel room, the musicians discuss about how **Zappa** always knows what they are doing. (**Ian Underwood** goes: "I've been in the band for years, and I know he always listens"). Meanwhile, **Larry**tapes everything. The musicians then agree to "pretend they don't know he is watching" and say hello to **Frank** to the camera that's shooting everything they do.



Flo, Eddie (Howard Kaylan) and Jeff (Martin Lickert) plan to quit the **Mothers** a form a blues band, since **Zappa** is "old" and they have no future there.

Rance Muhammitz introduces himself as the devil, and **Flo & Eddie** find themselves in **CENTERVILLE**, "a real nice city to raise your kids". (In the movie, **Centerville** is a concentration camp within which the percussionists of the orchestra are dressed like soldiers).

Miss Lucy and **Miss Janet** work in a rancid boutique. They have noticed there is a band in the city with horny musicians waiting to have some action. **Lucy** is excited with the idea, but **Janet** finds it repulsive, although she likes the "perverted" drummer with the English accent and the binoculars. (CC: *Uncle Meat* film).



Then the band plays "This town is a sealed tuna sandwich" and **Jimmy Carl Black** sings



"Lonesome Cowboy Burt".

Muhammaditz finally gives some beer to **Jimmy** and ask for the blood signing. The lonesome cowboy claims "he cannot be the devil, 'cos the devil has English accent; he has seen him 3 weeks ago on TV".

Then **Larry** recites about the difference between musicians and normal people, between rock musicians and classic musicians.

The **Mothers** play "Magic Fingers".

Then we see **Larry** again. This time he is listening to the tapes of the band speaking while he writes the notes "for his new symphony" after what he hears on the tape. (**Zappa** has been often accused of stealing ideas from his band members over the years).

Then we hear what was originally called "**THE PLEATED GAZELLE**" suite (comprising of "Motorhead's Midnight Ranch", "Dew on the Newts we got", "The Lad searches the night for his Newts", "The girls wants to fix him some broth", "The girl's dream", "Little green scratchy sweaters and corduroy ponce", "A nun suit painted on some old boxes")



while all these happens: **Larry** tries to catch the **hot nun**, **Motorhead** has his love affair with **Chunga**, and the **hot nun** takes "illegal" pills.

Then we see the famous **Dental Hygiene Movie**. Actually it's **Jeff** and his good and bad conscience voices telling him what to do. The **good conscience** tells him to stay with the group. The **bad** one tells him to quit the comedy group and form his own blues combo. In the meantime, **Jeff** drinks a potion, smokes a joint and rips off the hotel room (towels and all).

The **nun** has an overdose. She says she's going to die, while **Lucy** and **Janet** ignore her. They are excited since the English perverted drummer is watching them with his binoculars.



The whole cast parades on "Penis Dimension" opus, a song about how the size of the male organ worries men.

A new group/orchestra interlude follows starting with "She painted up her face" and ending with "Lucy's seduction of a bored violinist".

Then **Larry** monologues again, this time about how musicians are desperate to find a pussy and their personal methods to get one. "Each one has his own specialty for getting the girl of his dreams". The members of the group run to **Redneck Eats** to find these girls as we listen to "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy".



Jeff meets **Don Preston** at his laboratory. **Don Preston** is sure he turns into a monster with his secret potion, while **Jeff** says he (**Preston**) made a mistake joining the **Mothers**. He could be a star nowadays. **Jeff** leaves with a joint that **Don** soaks in his potion. **Preston** calls **Zappa** on the phone, tells him that everything went out as planned and asks "when is he going to get paid for this".

While we hear "What will this evening bring me this morning", we see **Zappa**'s eye watching everything that's happening. The **nun** finally "ascends to heaven". **Jeff** is in his hotel room under the effects of the marijuana joint and we hear voices saying "we have to get him back to normal before **Zappa** finds out and make him doing it in the movie". **Zappa**'s big right eye is there again.

The movie ends with the **entire cast** singing "Strictly Genteel".

As the closing titles roll up, we hear the postlude with business letters and the budget paperwork in the background.