On his early albums Frank Zappa always combined originality and inspiration, the composer Vanise. It was in those early works, particularly Lumpy Gravy, that Zappa confronted the possibilities inherent in merging rock and modern classical music, often with worthwhile and surprising results. His interest in things classical soon waned, unfortunately, and once the soundtrack to 200 Motels was recorded, Zappa would not utilize an orchestra again until 1977's Orchestral Favorites.

With Zappa Volume I, Frank sets out to correct that mistaken impression of him as opportunistic sleazemaster extraordinare, an by releasing a digitally recorded (OK, let's say, that's what I call) concert performance recorded with that most serious of institutions, the London Symphony. (This is the same bunch that recorded the Star Wars soundtrack, mind you.) The resulting work owes much to Vanise's compositional techniques, especially his talent for creating unusual tonalities through odd instrumental combinations, and his heavy reliance on percussion.

Of the five pieces on side one, only "Sac Juni" is new; "Pedro's Dowry" is an expanded version of"a previous favorites, while "Envelopes" reworks an instrumental from Ship Arriving Too Late To Save the Loved One. "Hump" is devoted to "Moe's Magic Herb's Vacation," a three movement symphony. The pieces may be pleasant-sounding and well-recorded, but Zappa substitutes lines for emotion, furthering Zappa's inventions not one whit. Although Zappa has proven his ability to control a large orchestra, he has not yet learned to compose for one. If it's creativity you want, wait for the forthcoming volume of chamber works. If you just want to prove to your parents that rock music must have a serious side, then this is the record for you.

Polph Hits Volume I various artists on Posh Boy Records.

Bobbie Fields and his Posh Boy record company are almost singlehandedly responsible for the nationwide spread of the L.A. punk/hardcore movement. Bands like the Circle Jerks and T.S.O.L. found a home on this immodest label, and this compilation presents a fairly representative cross-section of the stylistic variations evident in the output of such bands.

Despite the anomalies, and the fact that many of their songs are so long cut, the record remains an essential hardcore compilation, a document of a period of evolution for a new music scene.

Up! Baby Bhudda delivers an electronic rendition of the country classic "Your Chasin' Heart," and the Nuns best Blondie. But the New York Dolls with "Supersonic都被"on their debut album. Despite the anonomies, and the fact that many of their songs are so long cut, the record remains an essential hardcore compilation, a document of a period of evolution for a new music scene.

Fighter Pilot, Barry Diamond on I.R.S. Records.

"People often ask me how I look like this, but talk the way I do. Well, I'll tell you, I was raised by black Hasidic Jews — from the Philippines." This shock is the essence of Barry Diamond's humanely bawling through the back pages of movie magazines with their strange offers, or the front pages of the National Enquirer — or the Boston Herald, for that matter — with their bizarre stories. (By the way, both the Enquirer and the Church claim Elvis is not dead.) If the Church and The Book were meant to serve any real function, it would have to be that of rekindling a healthy, irreverent disrespect for this country's great institutions.

The bottom line is, if you're really curious about the Church of the SubGenius, don't spend ten dollars on an impenetrable dime novel. For a mere dollar you can get its classic interview book, A Boy's Life.

The Book of the SubGenius, 850 pages, more than 100 photos and heavily illustrated, is the ultimate reference book for sinners, cranks, junkies, morphophiles, and wise men and women who know they wouldn't get help from any book even if they needed it in the first place. If this statement smacks of Twain, you've penetrated to the heart of all the Church's ruminations. It is no more than variant of the irreverent humor Samuel Lionel Clemens made popular in works like The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and The Personal History of Her Life on the Earth.