

## Naked Gun is an hysterical law enforcement comedy after Police Squad

### NAKED GUN

Directed by David Zucker.  
Written by Jerry Zucker, Jim Abrahams,  
David Zucker, and Pat Proft.  
Starring Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley,  
and Ricardo Montalban.  
Opens today at Cinema 57 and Harvard  
Square Theatres.

By ROB MARTELLO

FINALLY, DIE-HARD FANS of the *Airplane* movie series and of the *Police Squad* television series can reactivate their interest in the entertainment industry. The same creative team for both of these unique projects is back, with their new film *Naked Gun*. With an all-star cast headed by Leslie Nielsen (the co-star of *Airplane* and *Airplane 2*), Priscilla Presley (of *Dallas* T.V. me), and Ricardo Montalban (best known as Mr. Roarke in *Fantasy Island*), *Naked Gun* is a continuation of *Police Squad*, and takes the concept of fast-paced comedy to the limit, surpassing even *Airplane* in its constant level of successful comedy.

Robert K. Weiss, *Naked Gun's* producer, said that *Police Squad* was cancelled after six episodes because it required too much attention to fully appreciate, and most television watchers wanted to relax. This "flaw" increases its cinematic value, and the audience is forced to constantly keep up with the endless gimmicks, back-and-forth comic action, and subtle clues revealing the next surprise. The rapid bombardment of hysterical situations also

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Ricardo Montalban plays a wealthy and respected LA businessman in *Naked Gun*. His hobbies include killing people for hire and being mean.

## Captain Beefheart fans get an album of cover remakes — a rare treat

### FAST 'N' BULBOUS

Various Artists.  
Fantastic Records and CDs.

By BILL CODERRE

LET ME BE THE FIRST TO call 1988 the "Year of the Cover." Just about every major group has remixed, remade, resampled, or recycled materials past. The Ramones, New Order, Phil Collins, and Michael Jackson brought back old favorites in new "1988 mixes." Depeche Mode brought that "euro" flavor to old rock standby "Route 66," making it *different* enough to score a novelty hit. And That Petrol Emotion took off the mantle of self-conscious "git-pop" for a while to turn in astonishing covers of some of Pere Ubu and Neil Young's best work: "Non-Alignment Pact" and "Cinnamon Girl."

I needn't even mention REM's numerous live covers (which I have seen in several bootleg packages as well as on the official *Dead Letter Office*), or the flagrant left-by-sampling permeating rap (and, believe-it-or-don't *Robert Plant* of all people, stealing his own riffs). And if I see one more repackaging of "Pump Up the Volume," I swear I will go on a killing rampage right there in the middle of the record store.

1988 has also seen a spate of Various Artists rereading old standards, case in point being the Disney-controlled, Newsweek-noted thriller *Stay Awake*, which certain less charitable colleagues of mine have called *Go To Sleep*. It's a not-altogether-justified appellation considering the, well, we say, *restrained* nature of the compilation — even The Replacements just don't seem to get out of second gear with their otherwise fine rendition of "Cruella de Ville."

One of the compilations you might not see in Newsweek is the topic of today's main rant. *Fast 'N' Bulbous* is a collection of a dozen or so remakes of the world's most obscure musical genius, Captain Beefheart, featuring XTC, Sonic Youth, That Petrol Emotion, and The Primevals. The import-only CD version has 15 songs. Now, the short-form review for those familiar with the Captain's astonishing career, is "buy it, but don't expect miracles."

Now, for those of you that are still reading this review, perhaps a few words of introduction are necessary. Who is this dude named after a variety of Burpee tomato? And why does every kool band on earth claim insight and inspiration from this god-like being that you've never even heard on WFNX?

Well, a long time ago, a guy by the name of Don Van Vliet, childhood friend of Frank Zappa, started to make his own variety of music based on Delta Bayou Blues and Texas Barbecue Boogie, with liberal dashes of sixties pure pop and the same general flavor of space music that Zappa had turned into a trademark. Under the name of Captain Beefheart, and with a voice that is shockingly similar to Howlin' Wolf's bandsaw gutterances, he sung love songs with such appealing titles as "Making Love to a Vampire with a Monkey on My Knee" and "My Head is My Only House Unless It Rains." He also sings about his piggy bank, and a whole lot of stuff much weirder than just about anything before or since. (Incidentally, anyone who has any clue as to what "Bat Chain Puller" is *actually* about may write to me at this paper; we can trade lyrics sheets or something.)

His masterpiece, (the Zappa-produced) second album *Trout Mask Replica* is an album so radical, so intense, and so complete that virtually all his later material seems to stem directly from it. (Indeed, many of the riffs reemerge as entire songs on later albums.) He wrote the entire two record set in a little over 48 hours, found and taught the Magic Band, and spent about a year putting the whole record together. *Trout Mask* truly is all of Beefheart in a single package, and it is still in print. (I regret that the space of this review does not afford me the chance for a complete discography; for full details, *Goldmine* magazine has admirable coverage in an article a few years back.)

The Captain's one shot at fame came when he released perhaps the best cover ever of "Too Much Time," which was racing up the soul charts until it was pulled from airplay because it was discovered that he was not black.

The career of Captain Beefheart continued in this unlikely fashion, with record companies refusing to release completed albums because they simply would not sell (they didn't), and producers urging him to make insipid pop albums that also didn't sell (*Unconditionally Guaranteed* and *Bluejeans and Moonbeams* are the low points of his career). The Magic Band finally deserted him, and although some of his best work comes from their reunion record *Ice Cream for Crow* (which I would personally recommend over *Trout Mask* as an introduction to Beefheart), it didn't sell either. Finally, a New York art dealer took a fancy to Van Vliet's drawings and paintings which adorn several of the records, and now the Captain is a noted Primitivist, still living (quite comfortably) in a mobile home somewhere in the Mojave

desert.

It's important to consider this perspective as we review the target of today's rant, *Fast 'N' Bulbous*. What we have here is a dozen remakes of Beefheart's more rock-oriented tunes by a variety of artists. This is not a case of tossing out "Louie Louie" or even another "(Question of) Temperature." Most Beefheart songs were never intended as rock tunes, and although this collection is slanted towards the up-tempo, it's not exactly a dance mix. The songs do span a number of albums and various points in Beefheart's career, but still are not exactly a representative retrospective.

Still and all, the somewhat esoteric nature of the material does force some intellectualism on the project. And although many of the versions here present new insights into the material, it might be best intended for the Beefheart fan who has everything, as opposed to the casual thrill-seeker or even the XTC fanatic in quest of new material.

Be that as it may, let's first turn the "technical exercises" of cover compilations. XTC provides a note-for-note cover of *Trout Mask's* "Ella Guru." It is less of a disappointment than a surprise that this song sounds *nothing* like typical XTC and almost *exactly* like the original. Indeed, comparing the versions side-by-side is almost as entertaining as the song itself is. The Beat Poets provide the obligatory instrumental with a tasty rendition of "Sun Zoom Spark." The twangy steel guitars change the original shuffle to a mild country feel. And Good and Gone provide a nice update to "Harry Irene," with a few topical lyric changes and an extra sound-effect or two. The substitution of violin

solo near the end is quite welcome, even though the Magic Band never had a fiddler. *Fast 'N' Bulbous* also scores high marks for good production values and an uniformly tasty mix.

But perhaps the more interesting part of the compilation lies in the "artistic interpretation" of the material. Hard as it seems, several of the bands have provided entirely new insights on the material, starting right off the mark with The Dog Faced Hermans remaking "Zig Zag Wanderer" as a hardcore tune, and The Screaming Dizbustlers punking up "Frying Pan," with what is best described as a chainsaw-strummed electric guitar. And The Primevals totally recast "China Pig" from a guitar-and-howl delta bayou blues piece into a genuinely *shaking* rockabilly tune.

But the "Best of Show" clearly leaps into the hands of Sonic Youth, who bring their samplerized theremin and vocals-via-bullhorn to *Safe as Milk's* masterpiece "Electricity." And even though this is the treatment they bring to tired and pointless rants about devils and politicians, in this circumstance their treatment is applied unusually intelligently to create a sense of mayhem without pandering to the level of intercut-pornography-and-surgical-procedures grossout that plagues the so-called industrial scene. (Hell, I may even have to take them seriously now.)

*Fast 'N' Bulbous* is not an album that will appeal to the masses. It is filled with obscure material treated almost reverently. It is short a little of the gung-ho spirit that makes covers fun. But for the Beefheart fans among us, it is a rare treat full of surprises.

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