



## THE ED PALERMO BIG BAND

### *Oh No! Not Jazz!!*

Cuneiform Rune 380/381 (2 CDs). 2014. Bruce McDaniel, prod.; Wayne Warnecke, eng. DDD.  
TT: 111:14

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

SONICS ★★★★★

More than any of his pop contemporaries, Frank Zappa was less a songwriter than a composer. You don't "cover" Zappa's music; you interpret a detailed score that allows for invention but punishes shortcuts. Many have loved Zappa's music, but few play it correctly. Saxophonist Ed Palermo has built a career on his expertise in framing Zappa's music in arrangements for large band. Disc 1 of *Oh No! Not Jazz!!* displays Palermo's crack unit at its best, with a vocal from Zappa alumnus Napoleon Murphy Brock on "Inca Roads." Palermo's orchestrations are played with sure-handed intonation and minor embellishments on the original scores that give the music life and resonance. Familiar themes that Zappa himself used repeatedly in his own work, such as the "Uncle Meat" and "Dog Breath" variations, coexist with the grandeur of "Chunga's Revenge," "Lumpy Gravy," and "The Black Page #2." Palermo reconfigures "America Drinks and Goes Home" as a great parody of Sinatra-Basie swing.

Disc 2 is a set of mostly Palermo originals that work remarkably well alongside the Zappa compositions, and actually pick up where "America . . ." leaves off, leading you to wonder what the Mingus Big Band might have done with Zappa-inspired work, particularly the vertiginous "Why Is the Doctor Barking?" Zappa's rule of conceptual continuity is adhered to, with "Prelude to an Insult" resolving, much later, in the near 10-minute climax of (you guessed it) "The Insult." Palermo's abilities to master Zappa's compositions in repertory and add his own in the same vein suggest that Zappa's legacy may eventually embrace an entire new school of composers.—John Swenson