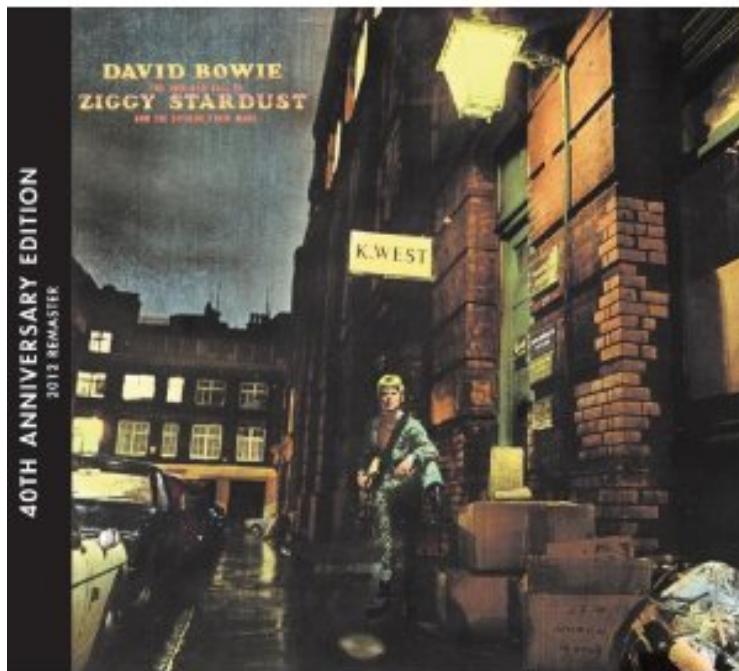


NEW COLUMN!
MUSIC NOTES
BY MARK MORRIS

This month's Music Notes is dedicated to a single album for the first time ever. It is David Bowie's *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*, one of my all-time favorite albums that has been in need of a re-vamping for over twenty years, and has finally received it in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the original release. If you are a fan of the album, go buy it immediately, you won't be disappointed! I was 10 years old the first that I heard this album, when my 17 year-old brother came home with the record, raving about how great it was. I had not seen him so excited about a band since Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix and The Allman Brothers Band's first albums had come out in the late 1960's. He was lucky enough to see all three Memphis shows that David Bowie played during the Ziggy era, and he begged my mom to let me go with him, but she would not relent, and I never got to see David Bowie live.

David Bowie – The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars

40th Anniversary Edition



The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars, commonly shortened to simply Ziggy Stardust, is David Bowie's fifth album, originally released on June 6, 1972. In celebration of the album's 40th anniversary, a special edition, remastered by original sound engineer Ray Staff, was released on June 5, 2012. The sound is vastly improved from the cold, brittle sound of the numerous versions of this album that were released in the last twenty plus years. Audiophiles and serious fans of the album have constantly searched out original vinyl, the original RCA CD (a straight transfer of the vinyl master tapes), and the rare SACD, since the sound quality was so bad on all of the available versions. The new mastering restores the warm sound, detail and tight bass, faithful to the original vinyl. The 40th anniversary version is available on CD, mp3 download, and limited edition 180 gram vinyl that includes a DVD with high resolution audio of the new stereo mastering as well as a 5.1 mix done by co-producer Ken Scott. The DVD also features four bonus songs recorded during the Ziggy sessions, but not originally included on the album. Both the CD and vinyl editions come in a gatefold cover (the original was a standard jacket) with artwork outtake photos on the inside, and an inner sleeve that replicates the original, with band photos and lyrics. This is an essential purchase for all Ziggy Stardust fans, it really sounds awesome.

David Bowie began writing and recording the loosely concepted Ziggy Stardust album before his excellent previous album, *Hunky Dory*, was even released. The Ziggy Stardust character was primarily inspired by obscure British singer Vince Taylor, who patterned himself after Gene Vincent. Taylor had drug problems, and became increasingly erratic after he began taking LSD, and during one concert, proclaimed that he was Matthew, one of Jesus' apostles. Bowie took the name from recording artist The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, and made Ziggy a great guitarist, like Jimi Hendrix. Bowie wanted to make a movie, stage show or TV show about the story of Ziggy Stardust, but that never happened. Instead, he took on the persona of Ziggy (leaving the fantastic guitar playing to band member Mick Ronson), and played him on stage in concert, even calling his band The Spiders From Mars. Though it is doubtful that anyone can discern the details from listening to the album, the premise of the Ziggy Stardust story is that there are only five years left on earth, and everyone knows it, so pandemonium reigns. Ziggy is an alien who is in a rock 'n' roll band on earth, and he sings the news as there is no longer any news media. He has a prophetic dream, and writes about a "starman" coming to earth to save it. In the end, invisible black hole jumpers show up on earth and tear Ziggy apart during the song *Rock 'n' Roll Suicide*, and they use his body to make themselves visible. I don't think that the story itself had much to do with the success of the album when it was originally released, as the music itself was and is the ultimate draw, but the vagueness of the songs do add an element of mystery to the equation. When Bowie went on tour, he dyed his hair bright red and wore flashy costumes onstage, and it was a huge success. Bowie eventually found it difficult to separate his Ziggy persona and his real self, as seemingly everyone outside of the band expected him to be Ziggy onstage and off, and his drug use progressively increased. Bowie says

that he nearly lost his mind, which inspired the title of his next album, *Aladdin Sane* (a lad insane), which was written during the Ziggy Stardust tour. On the last concert of the tour following the release of *Aladdin Sane* at the height of Ziggy-mania, on July 3, 1973 at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, Bowie announced that it was the last show that Ziggy and the Spiders from Mars would ever do, just before they played *Rock 'n' Roll Suicide*. The audience was shocked, but Bowie held true to his word. The band did record one more album together (with a different drummer) called *Pin Ups*, which is an all 1960's covers album. David Bowie continued to change direction and styles of music, earning himself the musical chameleon moniker. His last album was released in 2003, and he seems to be content in retirement currently.

The music on the Ziggy Stardust album is considered glam or glitter rock, but that name originated from the style of clothing and stage costumes more than the music itself. The album is mostly straight rock 'n' roll, plain and simple, but extremely well done. It falls somewhere between the hard rock of Bowie's 1970 album *The Man Who Sold The World*, and 1971's folky *Hunky Dory*. The song *Five Years* sets the stage and premise, and is followed by the aptly titled (and foreshadow to *Young Americans*) *Soul Love*, but the album really kicks in with *Moonage Daydream*, a rocking electric/acoustic song that is different from anything that ever came before it. It is the first song that I ever heard from this album, and it is still one of my all-time favorite songs. It rocks and it has some cool, spacey lyrics. Mick Ronson's guitar solo soars and takes the song to new heights. *Moonage Daydream* is followed by *Starman*, another cool song that is another great mixture of electric/acoustic rock, this time with an emphasis on the acoustic side. *It Ain't Easy* is the only cover song on the album, previously recorded by *Three Dog Night* and *Long John Baldry*. It is the only folky song on the album, but it has some rocking parts as well. *Lady Stardust* is a piano based ballad that may or may not have been inspired by Marc Bolan of *T. Rex*, but Bowie used to have a picture of Bolan projected on a screen behind him when he played the song live. Bolan and Bowie were close friends and had the same manager when they started out in the music business. The next five songs arguably make the best five song run in rock 'n' roll history. *Star* sets the stage in barn burning style in a song about how cool it would be to become a rock star, and the three songs that come after it are the stuff that rock stardom is made of. *Hang On To Yourself* sounds like Eddie Cochran with 70's flash. It was the first song that Bowie wrote for his "fake rock star" story, and it's the song that he used to open the Ziggy Stardust concerts with. It is timeless, awesome rock 'n' roll. The song *Ziggy Stardust* is next, with a killer Mick Ronson guitar riff that rivals Jimmy Page's best riffs. It may be a mid-tempo song, but it rocks, and after a short three note finish, the album's most well-known track, *Suffragette City* kicks in. *Suffragette City* is another great fast rocker. It is a classic rock radio staple, and one of Bowie's best songs ever. He says that he offered it to *Mott The Hoople*, but they turned it down. Ian Hunter, of *Mott The Hoople*, says that Bowie offered them *Drive-in Saturday* (the song wound up on Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* album), but they wanted

Suffragette City, but Bowie turned them down. I tend to believe Hunter, because he had a much cleaner lifestyle than Bowie, so his memory is probably better, and it's difficult to believe that Bowie would give them his (arguably) best song. He did give them the awesome All The Young Dudes, which was originally intended to be a Ziggy Stardust song, so who knows? The album closes with the great, and appropriate, Rock 'n' Roll Suicide.

Ziggy Stardust often shows up on all-time best album lists, and for good reason. It is one of the all-time best rock albums! I have absolutely no complaints with the sound quality of the new 40th Anniversary Edition, it really sounds as good as the original vinyl. There are other nice touches as well. The vinyl LP jacket has no UPC code on it (LP jackets didn't have UPC's until the 1980's), and the orange RCA label is replicated, but Bowie appears on the label in place of the RCA logo, as this release is on EMI. I would like to have seen the DVD available separately from the vinyl, because I know that there are people who would like one and not the other, though I want to have both myself. The cover photo outtakes in the gatefold are cool, but I have seen better shots from these photo sessions before. Perhaps these photos had never been published before, and that is why they were included. I would also like to have the single version of Starman included as a bonus track. It is unavailable elsewhere, and it has a louder Morse code keyboard part that many detail-oriented listeners miss. All of these are minor issues compared to how great the original album sounds, however. This is the most important part, and this edition delivers 100%. The 30th Anniversary had more bonus tracks and a larger booklet, but the sound was terrible, the left and right channels were reversed, the "One, two" count-in to Hang On To Yourself was edited out, as was the three note guitar bridge that links Ziggy Stardust and Suffragette City together. It is amazing that it took so long to get the album back in great sounding condition, but rest assured, it truly does sound great.