

What the press has said about Fast 'N' Bulbous:

**PORK CHOP BLUE AROUND THE RIND**

**2005**

**CUNEIFORM (RUNE 205)**

**"Few groups do justice to the music of Captain Beefheart...but this is something else. ... The rhythm section get right inside the structure of these tunes, Lucas synthesises two guitars' lines into one, while the brass take care of the main themes, teasing out unexpected melodies. The band rip into tracks from Trout Mask Replica with glee, transforming Pachuco Cadaver and Sugar 'N Spikes into raucous freewheeling celebrations of Beefheart's feral genius. An elongated When It Blows Its Stacks...is dark and sonically massive. It's quite a blast, and of course, an invitation to the mother of all karaoke sessions. [4 stars out of 5]"**

– Mike Barnes, *Mojo*, March 2005

**"Don Van Vliet--the titanic voice and blues-dada composer also known as Captain Beefheart--surrendered to the cruelties of the music business after his 1982 LP *Ice Cream for Crow*, dissolving the last of his Magic Bands and retiring... But **Fast 'N' Bulbous are no next best thing: They are the big brass band he never had. With bellowing horns arranged by saxophonist Phillip Johnston and pinpoint swordplay by ex-Magic Band guitarist Gary Lucas, Fast 'N' Bulbous ignite the R&B gunpowder inside the tangled surrealism of "Suction Prints"... The group attacks Van Vliet's songs with the same idiosyncratic precision that he drilled into his own musicians. Fast 'N' Bulbous also reveal a vital truth about this music: You can dance to it."****

– David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, January 27, 2005

**"...Don Van Vliet (aka Captain Beefheart) was much more than a neo-beat poet with musical accompaniment. In his head were not just words but also melodies and jagged, funky rhythms that he worked hard to communicate to his musicians. In turn, he empowered his groups to take the music in new directions... So it turns out (and, this CD is prime evidence) that when you take Beefheart away from Beefheart, you can still come up with something rather special. Credit for the success of this venture goes to guitarist Gary Lucas and especially to alto saxophonist and arranger Phillip Johnston. Aside from his fearless eclecticism and technical expertise, Lucas has...been a member of one of Beefheart's last working bands. He understands Beefheart's sound and his logic; Lucas' spiky, warped slide guitar is a strong link to the original songs... However, Johnston is the real genius of this session, essentially writing charts for a horn section (trumpet, trombone, baritone, and his own alto) plus the wildly improvising Lucas and a rhythm section of Richard Dworkin on drums and Jesse Krakow on bass. Johnston smoothes out the stuttering Beefheart pulse, giving the music a basic blues-rock feel and sometimes, more weirdly, the sound of a crazed college marching band... Others pieces...even project a bit of a New Orleans second-line strut, with contrapuntal interaction and hints of primitive funk or even Dixieland. ... Remarkably, these instrumentals hold onto Beefheart's obsessive strangeness, which is really the best tribute that Lucas, Johnston, and the rest of the Fast 'n' Bulbous crew could have given him. This CD is ragged but right, all the way. [4 stars out of 5]"**

– Bill Tilland, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

**"... The Captains' raspy, surreal vocals have been transposed into horn charts and the original arrangements have been extended to incorporate sections for improvisation on PORK CHOP BLUE AROUND THE RIND... The tunes... mostly brief, have a consistency to their execution that is spot on in their delivery. ...one can't help but be bowled over by Lucas' endlessly inventive guitar stylings. Backed by a horn section that at times' evokes an Appalachian marching band, Lucas' lysergic slide guitar excursions blend with the ensemble to create an unholy amalgam of American music. There is a surprisingly rootsy character to many of these arrangements..."**

**Hearing Beefheart's signature, counterpoint-laden, psychedelic Blues tunes arranged for an instrumental Jazz band reveals the intricacies at the heart of Beefheart's writing. The polyrhythmic shuffles and crazed counterpoint provide the perfect structural platform for a group of seasoned improvising musicians to launch from. At once joyous and challenging, Pork Chop Blue Around The Rind is that rare tribute album that reaches beyond its source material to create something new and even greater than the sum of its parts."**

– Troy Collins, *Cadence*, May 2005

**"Captain Beefheart is such a whacked-out visionary, you can't help having low expectations in approaching his songs as performed by anyone else. But with his onetime guitarist Gary Lucas leading the charge and saxophonist Philip Johnston handling the arrangements, the instrumental tribute band Fast 'N' Bulbous has a field day with the Beefheart songbook, turning his raunchy cubist blues into exuberant jazz-tinged delights.**

**...the songs are not only accessible, they're hook-happy. Johnston...does an inspired job of transposing the parts, allowing for plenty of free-form expression and making up for the absence of Beefheart's indelible growl.**

**...the band can't avoid losing some of his primordial magnetism. But no one has promoted his elusive merrymaking side better."**

– Lloyd Sachs, *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 20, 2005, www.suntimes.com

**"... So we should be grateful that there still are records around that from the very first note elicit an immediate strong reaction. ... Few albums succeed better in this respect than Trout Mask Replica, the 1970 record that..."**

**...found a dedicated group of adepts sprinkled over the world of pop, jazz and classical music in equal amounts. One of those converts is professed musical deconstructor Phillip Johnston, who started Fast 'n' Bulbous..."**

**...their first offering, Pork Chops Blue Around The Rind, is a raucous band music of sorts, featuring Johnston's horn arrangements of thirteen Beefheart originals. Stuttering and highly disciplined at the same time in true Beefheartian spirit... The secret weapon is bassist Jesse Krakow, who excels at a rigorous punch with controlled technique.**

**To successfully resurrect Beefheart's music is a major feat in itself, and on top of that Pork Chops is a very joyous and highly entertaining record. ...almost an hour worth of fun, good vibes, inventive charts and great slideplaying. ... Highly recommended for both the converted and the curious, and may it win some fresh Beefheart fans."**

– Jochem van Dijk, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, January 16, 2005

**"...As one might imagine, this is one wild ride, but a fun one as these interpretations take the Captain's music in a new direction and give them a new life... The spirited performances here definitely owe a lot to the downtown sound, thanks to Johnston's brilliant and often intentionally chaotic horn arrangements, yet it's Lucas' bad-ass slide guitar that cements the connection with the original versions. ...the rhythm section of Richard Dworkin (drums) and bassist Jesse Krakow keep this project planted firmly in rock territory. ... Definitely an original take on some of the best music ever made."**

– Peter Thelen, *Exposé*, #32, September 2005

**"Downtown New York experimentalists Gary Lucas and Phillip Johnston have...a band, Fast'N'Bulbous, technically able to ride the Captain's rhythmic roller coaster while still respecting the need for a playful insanity of their own. Although saxman Johnston is the main arranger, he keeps the democratic yet organized anarchy alive by allowing Lucas' nervous slide licks and the brass band funk of his fellow horn players plenty of room to dare risky improvs with help from the...rhythm section..."**

**Fast‘N’Bulbous teaches us to hear the Delta blues and free jazz of Beefheart in full flower. But their accomplishments go beyond the pleasure of hearing new dimensions in these compositions. They teach us that without the smart fearlessness of the avant-garde our pop will have neither fun nor freedom.**” – James Hopkins, *C-VILLE Weekly*, March 29 – April 4, 2005

**“Take cover, it’s Gary Lucas in Beefheart mode and he’s taking no prisoners. Tribute and revival albums rarely succeed... However, Lucas and co are, as ever, the exception to the rule. One reason for their success, other than they’re all barnstorming improvisers in their own right, is that though they may kick off with a Van Vliet theme, it’s never kept in aspic: it’s always the starting point for their own polyrhythmic showdown with the blues and any other goddamn musical genre they choose to mash to smithereens, er, sorry, deconstruct. ...you can’t replace the Captain’s...yowl, but the brass section alternative is buoyant, ballsy and diamond stud intricate. The result, at worst, is rattling good fun, and, at best, the band conjures something raw that really cooks...”** – Andy Robson, *Jazzwise*, April 2005

“...this studio date signifies a celebration of an innovator who opted out of the music biz in 1984.

During this **jovially orchestrated session**, the Fast ‘N’ Bulbous septet reworks a portion of Beefheart’s songbook, expounding upon key elements, such as his avant approach to blues, rock and free-rock. The ensemble’s flamboyant exultations are spawned by roaring horns layered atop lithely flowing rhythmic foundations. Lucas injects a bluesy component...via his lightly amplified, electric slide guitar lines. **The septet’s wily interpretations of Beefheart’s musical abstractions contain loosey-goosey slants on modern jazz. ... 3 1/2 stars”** – Glenn Astarita, *DownBeat*, June 2005

**“This Captain Beefheart Tribute led by Phillip Johnston and featuring Gary Lucas has done away with the good Captain’s growling vocals and surreal lyrics to concentrate on the music with a horn section subbing for his voice. And in doing so they’ve made us realize just how good the music was. ...this stuff swings like a fucker! ...”**

– Kami McNeill, *Jazz From Hell Productions – Funhouse Blog*, [jazzfromhellproductions.blogspot.com](http://jazzfromhellproductions.blogspot.com), April 13, 2005

“...Captain Beefheart (aka Don Van Vliet) and his Magic Band is often cited as an example of how musicians could play sophisticated post-rock music and still maintain a following. ...but many of the fans of Van Vliet’s...were more attracted to his storied weirdness than the music itself. ...

**That’s why Fast ‘N’ Bulbous’ first CD is so impressive. Truth be told, Beefheart and his various Magic Bands were...a lot better at so-called “fake” jazz, then the real stuff. However, this all-instrumental group has the chops and the instrumental acumen to go beyond this. ...**

Simple riff pieces in the main, Van Vliet’s melodies still give the septet members plenty of space on which to blow, with frequent pitch and tempo changes. ... Improvisations can be shoehorned into the songs without offending purists, plus the tunes are obscure enough for many to offer a new listening experience.

**Encompassing elements of Second Line strut, Middle European brass bands, vamping Stax-Volt horn sections, cartoony circuses and Western Swing, the 13 tracks flash by at breakneck pace**, most driven by strong backbeat from Dworkin and colorful string decorations from Lucas. ...the guitarist is able to mutate his output so that it contains hints of slide blues, Scruggs banjo picking, Hawaiian guitar and oscillating electronica tinged interludes. Krakow builds a foursquare rhythmic foundation, throughout. But there are times he or Lucas singly or together, suddenly unleash surf guitar runs.

Arranger Johnson, whose pioneering Microscopic Septet was a link between Beefheart, Zappa and John Zorn, contributes the occasional smooth alto solo and trumpeter Henke advances pointed, chromatic runs. But the most noticeable adaptations came from trombonist Fiedler and baritonist Sewelson. ...the latter manages the trick of transforming his axe into a fuzz bass. As for Fiedler, his expostulations range from wah wahs to whinnying...

**“Guitarist Gary Lucas and arranger Phillip Johnston recast Captain Beefheart tunes and make the case for him as a composer the equal of Thelonious Monk.** While Monk’s music evokes a New York taxi ride, Van Vliet’s compositions bring to mind desert landscapes, beautiful erosion.”

– Edd Hurt, *Nashville Scene*, “Best of 2005”, December 15, 2005

**Not exactly rock around the bebop, PORK CHOP BLUE AROUND THE RIND is a salute without being slavish.** Nor forgetting Van Vliet’s occasional surrealistic touches...the CD’s only drawback is the freight train speed at which most compositions are performed.

But that may result from staying true to The Captain’s rhythmic vision. “

– Ken Waxman, *JazzWeekly*, [www.jazzweekly.com](http://www.jazzweekly.com) & *Jazzword*, [www.jazzword.com](http://www.jazzword.com), July 17, 2005

“... The Captain’s raspy, surreal vocals have been transposed into horn charts and the original arrangements have been extended to incorporate sections for improvisation. The whole effort draws obvious parallels to what’s been happening in the Downtown East Village scene since the early Knitting Factory days. On first listen one may even be reminded of George Cartwright’s long standing group Curlew, among other stalwarts.

**The tunes, mostly brief, have a consistency and matter of fact-ness to their execution that is spot on in their delivery. There is no filler on this album, no fat on this pork chop. ....**At once joyous and challenging, Pork Chop Blue Around The Rind is that rare tribute album that reaches beyond its source material to create something new and perhaps even greater than the sum of its parts. **[Rating: 5]”**

– Troy Collins, *Junkmedia*, January 25, 2005, [www.junkmedia.org](http://www.junkmedia.org)

**“... Fast ‘n’ Bulbous...do the only reasonable thing left to do: They treat the music as compositions, open to new and fresh arrangements.**

With a four-horn lineup, the interplay is between the pair of reeds, the pair of brass, guitarist Gary Lucas (who played in the latter Magic Band incarnation, as well as the re-formed unit), and a rhythm section. Songs like...“Tropical Hot Dog Night” move the guitar lines to the horns, leaving it all strikingly familiar, while also revealing subtle powers in the simple melodies. ...” – David Greenberger, *Metroland*, August 18-24, 2005

“The world is filled with an overabundance of John Mayer’s, Green Day’s, and of course the ubiquitous Britney’s. But there is only one Captain Beefheart... Since his retirement...the musical world has been devoid of one of the truly eclectic and wonderful voices in music. Thank God for Gary Lucas, Beefheart’s guitar player on his last two CDs...who has assembled Fast ‘n’ Bulbous, a tribute band that does instrumental versions of the good Cap’n’s tunes. ...it’s a tribute to [Beefheart’s] songwriting talents that these songs work on a purely instrumental level. Not for the weak of brain.”

– Steven J. Athanas, “Sound Advice: Your pipeline to cool new music: Yep, it’s strange: ‘Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind,’ *Toledo City Paper*, Vol. 6 - Issue 18, March 30 – April 5, 2005

**“...Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind, the debut CD by Gary Lucas and Phillip Johnston's Fast 'n' Bulbous, treats Captain Beefheart to boisterous, full-scale version-a-ning, raising a curious point about tribute albums in the process—you can enjoy the better ones without being all that keen on the honoree. Except for a few cuts from Trout Mask Replica, Beefheart's primitivist dada never reached me, maybe because I'd already heard Howlin' Wolf and Ornette Coleman, and as inspired an idea as it was to conflate them, Beefheart never pulled it off. Johnston's arrangements do—and then some.**

Johnston's whimsical compositions for the Microscopic Septet are among the overlooked jazz treasures of the 1980s. Fast 'n' Bulbous are also seven pieces...but substituting trumpet and trombone for two of the Micros' saxes, and Lucas's guitar for Joel Forrester's piano, allows Johnston's charts for this outfit a swagger befitting material imported from rock. Beefheart gets a close reading that plumbs his unfulfilled ambitions; his affinity to free jazz, for example, is more evident from the shrieking saxophones on this "When Big Joan Sets Up" than it was from the sputtering ones on the original.

**The musicianship is top-notch. ... Yet you never get the feeling Johnston set out to "improve" Beefheart, all of whose edges are left jagged.**

Even someone unfamiliar with most of the tunes might spot them as Beefheart's just from Lucas's rustic bottleneck and slide... Former Magic Band member Lucas is rightly given the most solo space, but Johnston (on alto, rather than his usual soprano), Sewelson, smear trombonist Joe Fielder, and trumpeter Rob Henke...all come through loud and clear... what a pleasure it is to hear Dworkin...playing grand marshal in Johnston's parades again.”

– Francis Davis, “Version-A-Ning: Jazz tributes foreground Beefheart’s primitivist dadad and Miles Davis’s existential quack,” *The Village Voice*, February 15, 2005

**“...this instrumental salute to Captain Beefheart comes off like a Frank Zappa-directed jazz excursion, minus the tyrannical control-freak element. These tunes fly much like the wounded birds they were on the original Beefheart and Magic Band recordings, never hinting at which way the madness will turn.**

**... Turns out Beefheart’s music sounds just as strange without his bizarre-blues croon spewing hallucinogenic-informed nonsense.**

...Johnston reveals an admirable amount of patience in arranging the angular riffs and arresting chord changes of songs... Perhaps in part because he isn’t playing brass instrument, it’s Lucas who rises as the album’s star, cutting through the din at every right moment with a lean and spiky nonmelody to refocus the ears and reset the mind for the ensemble’s next dip into wonderful wackiness.”

– Russell Carlson, *Jazz Times*, Vol. 35 #6, July/August 2005

“As many before and after me, I first came across the work of Captain Beefheart by way of his landmark recording *Trout Mask Replica* and had my perspective on what music was, changed forever. From the 60s through the early 80s, the Captain, aka Don Van Vliet, pioneered a confounded form of art-rock-jazz that defies easy description. ...

**On the CD, *Pork Chop Blue Around The Rind*, guitarist Gary Lucas, who played with Beefheart in the early 80s, uses his seven piece band, Fast ‘N’ Bulbous, to successfully resurrect Beefheart’s music and spirit.** Thirteen of Beefheart’s songs are spectacularly conducted and arranged by saxophonist Phillip Johnson, who has substituted a horn section in the place of Beefheart’s jagged vocals.

... Beefheart’s music is meticulously composed of deeply complex, interconnected structures that travel fluidly at odd angles, fusing in bits and pieces from many genres. ...

**Torrents of disobedient snapping horns, sinuously darting slide guitarwork and thunder thumps of drum and bass create a joyfully surrealistic sound that will appeal to that wild ADD driven child lurking in us all.”**

– Michael Hopkins, *The Scene Online*, www.valleyscene.com, August 2005

**“... There is no way that any instrument known to man could replicate the voice of Van Vliet and this ensemble mostly avoids trying...**

The line-up, in parts, reproduces aspects of the Magic Band sound, minus the tuned percussion...and there is only one guitarist, Gary Lucas, who served with the Captain and gets to handle all the...guitar parts. It’s his sound that opens ‘Suction Prints’ and sets off the jaggedly energetic romp that is as tight as anything Beefheart arranged with the horns punching out riffs and leaving room for brief integrated solos. There are no extended blows...

...the horns pack the most punch on many pieces, like ‘When I See Mommy I feel Like A Mummy’ where they inject an atmosphere suggestive of swamps, miasmas and places a Beefheartian mummy may reside. ... The horns...dominate on ‘When It Blows It Stacks’ as trumpeter Rob Henke rasps and growls and saxmen, Dave Sewelson and Phillip Johnson, takes their turns. Trombonist, Joe Fiedler, unearths a throaty rasp which, whilst not exactly like the Beefheart growl, is just as spine tingling. ...

One of my all time favourites, ‘Tropical Hot Dog Night’ closes the cd with a joyous swing that recalls the original, Johnston’s alto taking the Captain’s part... You may miss Beefheart’s voice but Johnston’s arrangement ensures that the spirit of the piece is...in keeping with the version that graced ‘Shiny Beast’.

**And that is something that can probably be said of all the cd, the spirit is immediately recognizable. ...I think it may open the music up to others who didn’t hear it or ‘get it’ first time around and it sounds fresh enough to liven old farts too. All power to them.”**

– Paul Donnelly, “Gimme Dat Carp Boy: Fast’N’Bulbous: The Captain Beefheart Project: *Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind*,” *Tangents*, www.tangents.co.uk, 2005

“In light of a recent book by the British critic Stuart Nicholson that asks whether jazz is dead (and answers yes and no)... choices ... on my honor roll bespeak a diversity I keep trying to convince myself is evidence of life. ...

HONORABLE MENTION: ... Fast 'n' Bulbous: *Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind* (Cuneiform)...”

– Francis Davis, “New Hope for the Dead”, *The Village Voice*, December 20, 2005

“FAVORITES: FAST ‘N’ BULBOUS PORK CHOP BLUE AROUND THE RIND (Cuneiform free-jazz Delta blues prog-jam Captain Beefheart tribute album)”

– Chuck Eddy, “Eddytor’s Dozen”, *The Village Voice*, January 28, 2005

## **CONCERT PREVIEWS:**

**“...conductor/arranger/sax-o-mo-phonist Philip Johnston nurtures those who play through his Captain Beefheart Project with tough love. ...turning Beefheart’s corrosive vocal leanings into something that approximates a brass section. Indeed, that’s the adventure of this**

repertory-based ensemble: to reimagine the snarling funk of Beefheart's uneasily arranged songs with gloppy tints of New Orleanese, horn-ballism and Jazz&B rhythm. ..."

– A.D. Amorosi, *New York Press*, Vol 18, Issue 24, June 15-21, 2005, www.nypress.com

### EXCERPTS FROM ARTICLES & INTERVIEWS:

"... *Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind*, the debut album from Captain Beefheart tribute band Fast 'N' Bulbous, leaps out of the speakers with rare assurance..."

The disc, which pits Phillip Johnston's jazz-inflected horn arrangements against erstwhile Beefheart sideman Gary Lucas's slashing guitars, has its genesis in a concert at Ungano's Ritz Theater on Staten Island way back in 1971. It was...the occasion on which musical visionary Don Van Vliet debuted his epochal *Trout Mask Replica*... remarkably, both Lucas and Johnston were there.

...Lucas recalls... "I had never heard music played so courageously before, or with such panache. ... It was primal, and primeval."

...Johnston... counts the larger-than-life singer, multi-instrumentalist, and composer as one of the reasons he continues to pursue a career in music.

"I've always kind of grouped Thelonious Monk, Steve Lacy, Captain Beefheart, and Charles Ives together," the saxophonist says... "To me, they're great American originals whose music is completely personal and unique. And they all have this incredible breadth to their music in ways that are very similar. Their music has humour, intellectual rigor, a kind of angularity to it, and a kind of spirituality, for want of a better word. And they all refused to be swept along into the musical gestalt of their era. ...

Naturally, when the two decided to collaborate on *Pork Chop Blue Around the Rind*, the first thing they decided was that they were not going to try to recreate the past.

"When people have made tribute records where the music sounds very, very close to the original, that...seems like a waste of time, because you have the original and it sounds so good you could never do it better," says Johnston... "But if you can take something and put it through your own experience and show how it's been transmuted by passing through you, that can be interesting."

On that count, Fast 'N' Bulbous's debut is an unqualified success. Lucas's hard-edged guitar sound is an obvious link to Beefheart discs ...but his fierce fingerpicking is now set in a matrix of intricate, interlocking horn lines that are far more modern jazz than rock. Even for listeners who've never heard Captain Beefheart, *Pork Chop* will come across as a great New York City record: Fast 'N' Bulbous is smart yet brutal, harsh yet sweet, virtuosic yet gritty.

And for those of us who...spent their formative years under the Captain's spell, it's deliriously gratifying to hear these new takes..."

– Alexander Varty, "Beefheart graduates re-create the magic", *Straight.com (Georgia Straight)*, www.straight.com, March 24, 2005

"Often called the Salvador Dali of rock, Don Van Vliet – recording as Captain Beefheart – was one of the genre's few true originals. ... We reached the inventive New York guitarist/bandleader Gary Lucas, who played on the newly re-released albums (and co-leads a jazz-oriented, all-instrumental Beefheart tribute ensemble, Fast 'N' Bulbous), for his recollections. ...

Q: Why is Van Vliet's music so intriguing?

A: It's challenging, complex, full of mystery, humor, complexity. His songs are little puzzles that people will be trying to work out for years to come. He had some of the most peculiar methodology I've ever heard of, but he got the music generated. His instructions to us were sculptural. One time in the studio he handed me a scrap of paper that just said, "Play like you died.""

– Fred Shuster, "A look into heart of Beefheart," *Daily News*, October 23, 2006, dailynews.com

CLOUDS AND CLOCKS: "An interview with Gary Lucas and Phillip Johnston (Fast 'n' Bulbous)" by Beppe Colli, March 29, 2005, in *Clouds And Clocks*, www.cloudsandclocks.net

[excerpts:]

In the liner notes that appear in the *Pork Chop Blue Around The Rind* CD booklet both of you write of having attended your first Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band concert at Ungano's, New York. ...

What was your impression? What, in your opinion, made that music stand apart from the other music that you were familiar with at the time?

Gary: The overall aura was like The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari with Don Van Vliet the impresario displaying his incredible living miracles. I had never ever heard music turned upside down like that, played with such intensity and precision. I had never heard guitars approached in that way ("Guitar is merely a stand-up piano" - DVV).

Phillip: The music had an extraordinary purity. It seemed very much devoid of ego and it seemed to present a fully formed alternate universe. ...

The music just seemed very stark and beautiful and singular. Very disciplined, yet with a quality of wild abandon and intensity.

.....  
Phillip, on most Captain Beefheart records the vocals are quite upfront, with the instrumental parts pretty much in the background. I'm very curious about the way you made the individual parts surface while at the same time avoiding knots.

Phillip: I guess I've never heard the instrumental parts as being in the background. As a composer I always listen to all the parts of any music equally to some extent. There is something about the presence of words which make all other elements fade into the background, and, removing those, everything else immediately rises to the surface. The rest of it is just a matter of orchestration and arrangement, which has been a preoccupation of mine through all the music I've written for the past 30 years or so. I also had a very good orchestration teacher, Edgar Grana, who taught me to be audacious in translating freely from one instrumental palette to another.

.....  
Phillip, compared to the versions that appear on *Pork Chop Blue Around The Rind*, Beefheart's originals are a lot more - is "aggressive" the right word? In my opinion, most of your arrangements have a lighter, breezier feel that differs quite a bit from the versions we all know. Would you mind talking about this?

Phillip: ...the originals are mostly performed on electric instruments, and the horns, while usually played through microphones are essentially acoustic instruments, driven by the breath. The twangy, trebly, edgy sound of the electric guitar is one of it's greatest strengths, and is part of what gives the originals their wonderful angularity. ... the horns bring a whole different history, a different physics and a different chemistry to the music.

Also my own music is very melodic and very contrapuntal, and I emphasized these aspects of the music because a) I appreciate them, and b) I feel they are under-recognized.

**I think one of the strengths of Fast 'n' Bulbous as a group is that it is balanced by many opposites. Gary retains the edgy guitar sound for us, which is often pitted directly against the horns. Often a guitar line is doubled by another instrument, such as a saxophone or trumpet, an effect that Frank Zappa also often used very effectively in a lot of his early orchestrations. As a generalization I would say that the rhythm section brings more of a rock flavor to the music and the horn section brings more of a jazz flavor, and the interaction of these two as they rub up against each other provides an exquisite tension that is felt in many of the tunes. But none of these musicians can really be put in one single bag – that's what van Vliet was talking about when he wrote *Lick My Decals Off Baby*: "There ain't no label for this bottle".**

....

*In closing, I'd like to know if in your opinion Captain Beefheart's music is any nearer to being accepted/understood than it was at the time of your first concert at Ungano's.*

Phillip: My answer is of course: yes and no. Yes, in that many people who were at Ungano's...have gone on to do great things in music and elsewhere, and both musicians and fans see a love of Beefheart as a kind of secret handshake of knowledge about, and love for, unconventional music. No, in that the world has become, if anything, more inhospitable a place to that kind of unique vision. It took Fast 'n' Bulbous 3 years to get a record out, and I venture to say that if Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band were performing today, it is unthinkable to suggest that they would be able to get a record deal with the equivalent of the kind of record companies that they did in the 60s, 70s and 80s. And **record labels like Cuneiform have become very rare indeed."**

– Beppe Colli., *Clouds And Clocks*, CloudsandClocks.net, March 29, 2005