

Frizz Fuller: “we’re not the reals”

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there is no patchwork desert-songster personification that can be pulled from a hat that can do any other than truncate the life and times of robert “frizz” fuller / to lay an image out that might begin to tell of the “him” might be, the bathwater warmth of the santa anas frisking a coulter pine, shadowless in in-patient struggle, amidst a bossa nova borax mesa / did he have the eggs of free-range hens and beef brains for easter breakfast? / did he eye the cranes, white nor pink, and carom through the desert by the quartz light of a tiki torch, searching for an imaginary woman, a trailer park figurine, a fatherless child in tow, slung to the hip, the night whipping the drooping flag of a mythic prostitute’s long hair / he once lived briefly at the orange hotel in ontario california, he once took the carpet off up to the cement, painted everything army barracks green, walls, table, salt shaker, everything, and then wrote “*martians at the window (and you in my arms)*”

the premiere’s to frizz fuller’s songs were not on MTV / liz darrow jones of claremont recalls, speaking to me through the window of her mercedes, that fuller sang his then brand new song, *standing in corners*, over and over as if on a loop, in her vintage clothing shop *romeo’s*, in an almost teetering on loitering fashion, flatfoot on the pavement but as if from a balcony / she recalled once a group of friends swimming in the late night moonlight in an orange grove’s water reservoir / frizz approached treading and tried to romantically comfort her with a warning, which I’ve always held as one of the greatest pick-up lines of all time, “don’t be alarmed if I smoke while I swim”, which she said he actually did masterfully, keeping the ember miraculously hoisted above the agua like an oakie gene kelley

with the royalties from his tunes covered by david lindley (*she took off my romeos, quarter of a man, and no way baby*), and firstly produced by jackson browne, he bought a muscle bound ford grand torino, a bold and race and rancor red, and pill white, like an american flag with the blue part torn off and discarded / fuller, this unassuming man, was also to be the very character driven fodder in and about novelist kem nunn’s best selling cactus noir, *unassigned territories* (1987 del acorte press) / so wasn’t it then enough to be hailed by the likes of linda rondstadt, chris darrow, ben harper, leo kottke, and phish’s mike gordon, as a songwriting island unto himself? / or was he to be just another in a ragged list of sad rejected scribes living in his mother’s den in apple valley, california, only to be hospitalized and die in some sort of lock-away rest-home digs in las vegas, which had nothing to do with the dance step, the charlton hospital / now, and after the fact, only a small fistful of recordings lie in testament, in shoe boxes, deteriorating like the future of a once beautiful red tamale dinner, aging into a sort of science project / not a story as wholly sad as an out-of-tune upright piano, but more a colossus of brain lightning, and the far and few between genius of alkaline unpredictability

there was a child and at the same time there was a man, with square dusty wig-looking hair, damaged by too many thoughts of the sun / clark kent issue specs, bottle thick, making prehistoric blue yokes of his eyes / false teeth on the nightstand, fate for some awaits in the sky like scorpions waiting in gold cowboy boots / middle of the night, off of his medication phone calls to friends, warning of a hippie concentration camp run by FBI, aliens, and perhaps sissy spacek as a lover / not to be left behind when the future hit, he let the dust reclaim his old upright and he shifted over to the cheesier vaudevillian side of the casiotone, playing it on his lap like a steel guitar, his jade plant stare pitted asunder / sometimes at the *starvation café* in fontana, california, a one time petri dish of inland empire songwriters, he would stand up on the bitter boards of the stage, because that’s what rock stars do, and let the jack-in-the-box drum machine, that was sewn into the instrument by its frankenstein maker, swell to the edges of andy kaufmanism / his existence was a test, and his music when played by himself was somewhere between, will rogers, roy rogers and buck rogers, the three all ready and champing at the bit to quote mr. rogers verbatim at a keen moments notice / but there was also a formal rigor there, a few notes of the duke, irving berlin, and a heavy splash of scott joplin, but it was yet to struggle under such a load of psychic bricks that we now need and appreciate the future as a red carpet for a lot of what was subtly being said

what you're holding in your head right now is what philosophy is given hands for / in the form of this digital time machine a, man more than seemingly catapults past his very own death / tangible as any tiger striped wood on a piano, as secret as any don ho cult, them meeting in the reclusive privacy in the bare bulb feed store back rooms of the hamlets of small fry towns like daggett, and barstow

frizz fuller was a legend to me as a songwriter, he was a warm friend and likewise human being / I won't soon forget his polyester suits, occasional sammy davis jr. hats, and the ever present roi tans tucked into the jacket pocket like satchmo's hand protruding / on one pilgrimage out to visit him and his mother in apple valley, I brought a bottle of *bali hai* wine of which he majestically refused sacrament of / I remember a letter on the kitchen table, as I waited by myself, it addressed in large nervous crayon script, "to roy rogers" / he played a few tunes for me and I was fueled to the moment, and then he let me in on a secret, drawing me close in "third man" confidence and saying in a heightened whisper, that he was in fact now studying the complete works of emily post, and could I keep that just between the two of us

the last time I saw him though was several years later and out in the other cow skull desert town of las vegas, nevada / he refused, with a swiping gesture, to talk about any adventure of his musical life, settling back, probably to save credibility with the hospital staff, more into the regal tennessee william's stage demeanor of a retired general / we drove, with his doctor's permission, my mini-truck a crumpled egg white sonnet, up into the blush red rocks above the sin city strip, and we had our last set of conversation on this earth amongst a circular audience of creosote, the valley nestled down below like a wine glass filled with sand

the california desert has always been vibrated alive with crackpot vitality / from silverless prospector, miles mayhem, with a thorny beard, mining the poetry of a heart's wrench, and fabricating into life and myth the fabled *hulaville* on a victorville, california roadside / and the idea of busty hula girls not forgotten, and dead forgotten trees baking in the sun, alive only with the regal trash of colored bottles erect on the dry branches / or maybe *moby's dock* with it parched sculptures formed from the carcasses of cactus rind / the vulture risks his life on the road kill, it glistening in his eye like a belly full of rubies / our stars out here are not marbleized, to the detriment of mortality, into sidewalks with golden inlaid lettering / our stars we let hang, raining darkness upon the smell of the weeds and the movement of the grasshopper-mouse in the then form of light / our stars just seem to lie spread out flat on the abyss, like it was just more land, only up, like little crystal *'s referring you to footnotes, or the reflection off of a mouthful of fillings in a trailer court manager's smile, leading us to an appendix in the demystified back shed of true history, a history un-campaigning for itself, at which we undoubtedly find one frizz fuller, at a cactus colored piano, singing in an angelic rasp, " I stop out, I stop out"

apple valley days

in regards to our inland empire 'hall of fame', frizz fuller is indeed one to be duly en-skied and sainted / in the scope of the entire world his work has the grist and the grift of an everyman's salt, sometimes like picasso condemning both eyes to the lone side of a face / not only has he influenced a lot of us to take a head long dive into the very pursuit of songsmithing, he has also left us with a much wider valley of breath to move the weight of creation around in / he stretched the boundaries so tight that you could play notes upon them, and then upon exit left us with a huge humanitarian feeling for him, really as friends, and symbolically as social heathens, and last but not least, outright fans of the unknown

the apple-less apple valley was once a shockingly desolate homesteading frontier / shelves of sand rested on living room window sills like snow from another planet, as dustbowl regalia / until somewhere in the 1970's a not so rare fungus in the form of satellite dishes began to dot the squalor and foretell the future / the seemingly all-reaching tentacles of the mythic los angeles bubbled across and over the wave of a transverse mountain range, and saw, through a hollywood sized hunger, this prospector's playground / roy rogers and dale evans were already there, like

hay-bale buddhas, spouting new christian rhetoric, opening up a hillbilly sideshow caliber museum, said to be licking their wounds from dale's marital affair allegations with rival crooner, spade cooley, beyond the subsequent murder by him of his ranch house bride / it was a noir story as easily blinded by too much light as anything that could be smothered in darkness / leaving us to remain, in shakespearean conclusion, with the age old question, "is there truth beyond the sunset colors?"

frizz meets the pomona valley

on sept. 14, 1947 robert "frizz" fuller was born into the town of perry in pike county near fishhook, illinois / he died on aug. 19, 2000 at mt. view hospital in summerland, nevada at 52 years of age / He was laid to rest at the veterans memorial cemetery of south nevada / grave site N-247

frizz's father,; harold "hal" fuller, was a welder by day and a hill musician by night / He performed and recorded with a county group called the *tennessee hoedowners*, out of illinois, who on their many treks following the wabash river down towards nashville, served as a back-up band for the likes of such honky-tonk iconography as hank williams sr., eddie arnold, and later appeared on several 78's on the *london* record label with roy king, billing himself then as *the singing policeman* / after serving in wwii in 1955 hal brought a young, pre-frizz, bob fuller to Pomona, california, where senior fuller secured himself a job as a source inspector for the *atomic energy commission*, his energies centered around the *san onofre* power plant / It was here that hal fuller slunk into musical retirement as rock'n roll turned into the bright shiny dumpster that, like a rodger corman plot, swallowed hillbilly music whole and full / the music didn't exactly go away, it just went underground a bit, and was honorably mutated for survival by the likes of our own buck owens, wynn stewart, and a handful of sage brush die hards / hal would often take the family to see *the maddox brothers and rose* at their *maddox* playhouse in claremont, california on that college torn stretch of historic route 66

the early years of frizz fuller were ideally full of orange groves, steel guitar lessons, and a father traipsing in from an atomic nuclear power plant at the supper bell / a much more honest depiction of a west coast lifestyle than that hand fed to us by *ozzie and harriet* on a per-capita level / upon manhood frizz joined the coast guard, becoming 1st class seaman robert fuller, and upon a cutter boat destined towards its guard of the bering strait, off the coast of oregon, the weight upon the sensitive artist that we all knew came crashing down, he had a nervous breakdown of sorts, one from which he never totally recovered / but for better or worse, depending on who is living his life, he drew ever farther inwards, and he did become at that time, except for to his immediate family perhaps, the frizz fuller than we all got the grace to know, and grew to now forever love



Bob "Frizz" Fuller and Patrick Brayer at the Starvation Café in Fontana, California