



I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney

Mudhoney

[King of Hearts Productions](#) - KOH-03 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#)

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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The *I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney* docu-DVD kicks off with vocalist/rhythm guitarist Mark Arm saying "Any time you're playing music for the crowd instead of yourself...snort!...yer fucked!", and I can think of no better way than that of summing up an elusive quality that sets certain bands apart from the glittering 1040 Short Form hitbound careerists found elsewhere. Ah, but then **Rolling Stone** stooge David Fricke, Mr. Fanny Was The All-Time Best Rock Band (sweet Jesus!), makes a truly dumb-ass metaphor about Arm's workaday job at the Sub Pop label, and I'm reaching for the valium, hoping it will stop the gagging...or the laughing. Who is this guy? Christgau's illegitimate son? But hey, as intoned a moment ago, who the fuck cares about corporate kiss-assery? The point of Mudhoney was to kick out the jams tough and dirty, and damn the consequences. The boys were more responsible for grunge than any other ensemble, Nirvana included, and paid a rather heavy price for their refusal to compromise. That becomes abundantly apparent in this video—though, with the gents' indomitably blithe spirits, you'd never know it.

Did I mention they like to drink? Oh hell yeah, these are some drunkard motherfuckers, and their profane Christmas manger scene has gotta be one of rock and roll's most hilarious birdflips ever. True proles, Mudhoney got down with anyone and everyone and would not go onstage until they were properly pickled. Look again at all the past footage you've so far seen on MTV and elsewhere, and that'll all of a sudden explain a lot. But someone makes the comment that Mudhoney was the bridge between the 60s and punk, and this becomes a rather telling point as Blue Cheer riffs mingle with Stooges rhythms and punk intensity. Even Sonic Youth felt the competition after seeing these maniacs fly all around the stage, wailing away.

I was particularly amused over hair-pulling about the term 'grunge', something referred to mostly pejoratively, but who's kidding who? It's a perfect term! Geez, the airs some of these musicians, crits, and fans get once a camera's trained on 'em...but that's also what's so cool about videos like this one: no one's faking rivers of Grammy Award tears for the wonderfulness of it all amid a sea of desperate fucking yuppies. Sink into the quick-flash cut techniques everywhere in *I'm Now*, and the semi-hallucinatory outfall will have you properly oriented, riffs, remarks, and emotions flying all over the place. The band's history is well but convolutedly chased—including the fact that the name was ripped from an old trashploitation flick by Russ Meyer, one of the kings of B movies, the perverted Erskine Caldwell of film—as well as the associations with Sub-Pop and the sub-universe revolving around it (and, yo, are the management guys zombies or what?; they put a whole new inflection on 'deadpan').

Then there's Manager Bob, who was even more lunatic than the band (and the footage of the Berlin gig kinda gives the contrast between dueling franticities), further proof that Mudhoney did nothing conventionally, an aggregate of hedonist anarchists. Credit must be given to the film's editor for maintaining a tight pace and narrative linearity without a moment of voiceover, yet still crafting a high degree of dispersion and randomness in perfect context. That ain't easy to do. In the end, Mudhoney comes off as the wastrel talented curiosities next door that everyone likes to party with but no one can figure out. You keep expecting the boys to sell out, to disembowel themselves for a pack of suits on Sunset, and yet they never do. Frank Zappa claimed the music business was the filthiest biz on Earth, and more than a little of that is reflected in what Mudhoney experienced with the majors. The irony is that the label they started with and made into what it was, Sub Pop, went thru very similar experiences, came out the other side of the wringer as well, and ended up re-teamed with the band. There's a certain sweet propriety to it all, when all's said 'n done, ain't there?

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