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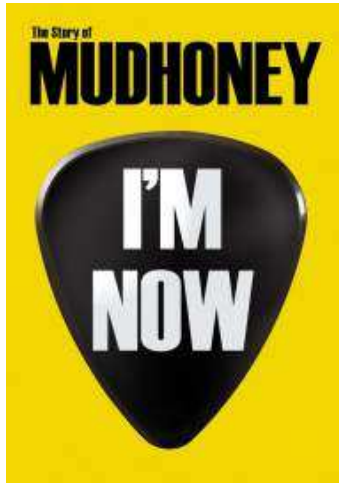
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MUDHONEY
I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney (King Of Hearts Productions)



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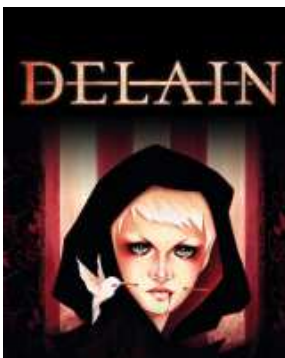
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MUDHONEY ruled the Nineties. At least they should have.

While you're probably wont to get on a few bad sides by referring to the revered sludge punkers as the godfathers of grunge, the safest and fairest assumption that can be made about **MUDHONEY** is they (not **NIRVANA**) altered the course of American rock music and it was, for all intents and purposes, coincidental. Call 'em grunge if you have to, but **MUDHONEY** was far richer in execution and projection with such bombastic and funky dynamism you have to separate them from their more fruitful peers, **PEARL JAM**, **SOUNDGARDEN**, **L7** and of course, **NIRVANA**.

Without the succession of the "**Superfuzz Bigmuff**" EP, the 1989 self-titled album and "**Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge**", only the **MELVINS** (a direct wellspring for **Kurt Cobain**) could've engineered the subversive overthrow of predominating hair rock and watered-down speed metal that was glomming the American rock scene. Yet for all the powerful dirge and distortion-bled crunch of the **MELVINS**, it was **MUDHONEY** that married Sixties psychedelics and acid rock with then-contemporary basement punk for a raw, frenzied tone that quaked its rag-tattered audience, much less its tireless, agitated (and frequently shitfaced) performers.

To call **MUDHONEY** one of the most important bands in rock history is only acceptable to a cult sanction, but it's the stinking truth. "**When in Rome**" and "**Bleeding Truth**" from 1992's "**Piece of Cake**" album were





ROME and **Bleeding Through** from 1992's **Piece of Cake** album were cannibalized by **NIRVANA** and **HOLE** whether or not either band's surviving constituents want to testify to it. Forget the fact neither they nor their contemporaries could step up to the wah-tripping dementia of **"No End in Sight"**, **"Make it Now"** and **"Suck You Dry"**. Everything preceding **"Piece of Cake"** was studied and snapped-up by the face people grungers who at least kept things real enough to acknowledge **MUDHONEY's** profound impact upon their craft.

"I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney" explores the formation and influential sway of the group during the transitional period of American rock in the early-to-mid Nineties. Director-producers **Ryan Short** and **Adam Pease** (who have in the past done a documentary on grunge principals **TAD**) assemble **MUDHONEY's** story with accuracy and moreover, an entertaining grasp of art house utilizing interjected footage of old films in smarmy fashion to accent certain points (mostly in condemnation of corporate label greed). Their film is fast-paced, so much you're half-screaming at them to let the snippets of **MUDHONEY's** tunes play longer, but that's more testament to **Short** and **Pease's** shrewdness in selling their story, as it is to the hyper, giddy throb of the music itself.

Following the band's genesis from the jokey roots of **MR. EPP AND THE CALCULATIONS** (derived as a poke against **Mark Arm's** math teacher) and the short-lived though frequently-championed **GREEN RIVER** (which also contained the nucleus of **MOTHER LOVE BONE**), the documentary shows the alliance of **Arm** and his reedy, scorching sidearm, **Steve Turner**. Once recruiting drummer **Dan Peters** from **BUNDLE OF HISS** and **MELVINS** weekend warrior **Matt Lukin**, the future incarnation taking its name from an old **Russ Meyer** B-film (B for "boobs" in this case), **MUDHONEY** began an unexpected path of attainment that was not only their birthright, but also of their in-and-out house label, **Sub Pop**.

The film focuses a heavy concentration upon **Sub Pop Records** and how it barely survived despite the runaway underground success of **MUDHONEY**. **"I'm Now"** thus becomes more compelling of a story as the band makes the critical decision to bust loose from **Sub Pop** and court the major markets. Revelatory and honest, the original lineup of **MUDHONEY** discusses their ups and downs as a band migrating from indie to big league, even as **Sub Pop** burst into a commercial sensation of their own once brought into the fold of **Geffen** to release **NIRVANA's** profitable juggernaut, **"Nevermind"**. Taking nothing whatsoever away from that ephemeral recording, without **MUDHONEY's** **"Touch Me, I'm Sick"**, you can hardly imagine **NIRVANA** carrying all of the same menace beneath their brackish tunefulness.

Yet the prevailing (though never overtly stated) thesis of **"I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney"** holds that the group might've gone straight the head of the class if they'd never left **Sub Pop**. While engineering their own course with hardly a steerage from their trueness of gutter punk, it's almost an epithet that **MUDHONEY's** modest rise and slow decline was from taking a less modest path. Their time with Reprise coughed up interesting albums, even if **"My Brother the Cow"** was doomed to suffer the backlash of angry **Kurt Cobain** fans who failed to see that **"Into Yer Shtik"** was more targeted against the music industry at-large than any one individual. As if the goofball blow farting and techno interjections on **"Piece of Cake"** weren't spiteful enough jabs. Albeit, **Mark Arm** does squirt a shot of a butane upon the **"Shtik"** matter by suggesting that any inferences against **Courtney Love** (whose anti-crusade probably had as much to do with the album's lack of favoritism) aren't far off the mark, at least in part.

Supplemented by testimonials from **SOUNDGARDEN's** **Kim Thayil**, **PEARL JAM's** **Stone Gossard** and **Jeff Ament**, plus **SONIC YOUTH's** **Thurston Moore** and **Kim Gordon**, a host of media journalists and **Sub Pop's** front office, **"I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney"** is crucial viewing. It just may change a few minds about the here-and-gone coup of grunge while validating **MUDHONEY** as resolute rockers. **Mark Arm** conveys perhaps the greatest (if understated) denunciation of drug usage ever filmed in a rock documentary. Even though **Matt Lukin** gave way to current bassist (and medical technician) **Guy Maddison**, his continuous presence at **MUDHONEY** gigs and all over this film proves there's a blood brother kindred spirit lending credence to this band's authenticity. Watching **Mark Arm** actually working at the label his band helped build is humbling stuff. To think your copy of **"Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge"** could've been

packaged and delivered by the man himself; it harkens the DIY ethos of **Ian MacKaye** and **Dischord**.

MUDHONEY never set out to undermine heavy metal music since their objective was to simply down their own thing inside their own hub. It just so happened what they were doing resonated with many people and the winds of change were ready to carry their amplified angst to both the right and wrong sectors. Never condemn them for that. Grunge to **MUDHONEY** is every bit the insult the original connotation of the word carries.

- **Ray Van Horn, Jr.**

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and they continue to be. Their new album is absolutely KILLER.

Long live Mudhoney!

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