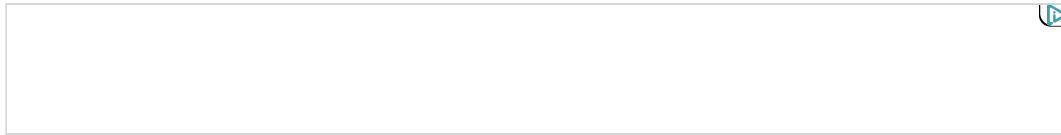




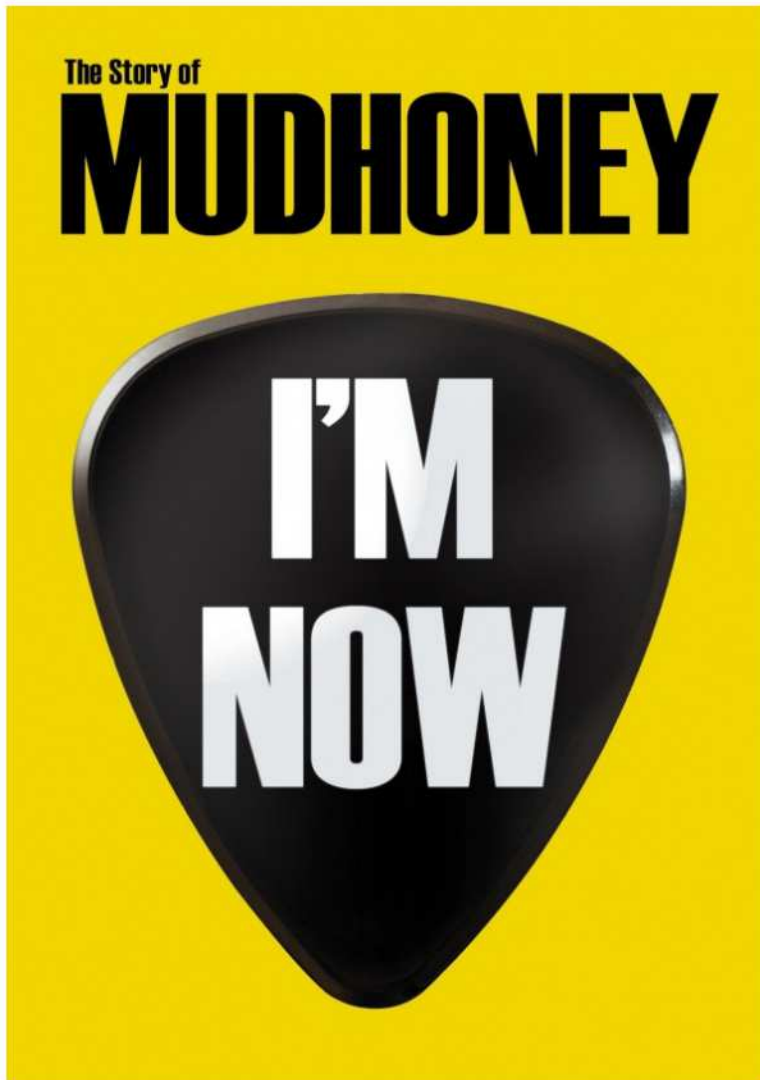
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I'm Now: The Story of Mudhoney DVD Review

By [Greg Barbrick](#) on February 28, 2013 12:54 PM | [0 Comments](#)

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In 1988, the song "Touch Me, I'm Sick" by Mudhoney was the first blast of what would come to be called "grunge." It remains an incredible tune, definitive really, and if it all ended there, it would have been a good run. At least that seems to be the feeling of the guys in the band, as expressed in the new documentary *I'm Now*.

The story begins in the early '80s with a very different group, Mr. Epp and the Calculations. As native Seattleite, I remember Mr. Epp, and believe me, nobody ever expected anything to come of them. The "band" were more of an art project than anything else, and led by Mark Arm. It was a very long time ago, and Mr. Epp's brand of pseudo-Devo was really kind of a joke. What made the whole thing worthwhile was the fact that

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they were all in on it. In fact, the group encouraged their own ridicule with ludicrous ads and "reviews" in *The Rocket*, the local music magazine.

The focus on music became more serious with the formation of Arm's next band, Green River. Although he winces today at the thought of naming a group after the notorious serial killer, there was no denying the ferocity of their music. Besides the guitar and vocals of Arm, Green River featured Steve Turner (guitar), Jeff Ament (bass), Stone Gossard (guitar), and Alex Vincent (drums). *Rehab Doll* was their only album, and it was the first full LP by a single artist to be released from the nascent Sub Pop label. Afterwards the band split, and went on to form Mudhoney and Mother Love Bone/Pearl Jam.

Looking back, it is a little hard to believe, but at the time the lines between Rock vs. Punk Rock were sharp. If you showed up in the wrong clothes at the wrong show, you would likely be beaten up. This situation played itself out in Green River, apparently when they were opening for the young, unsigned Jane's Addiction. Gossard and Ament thought Farrell and company were great, while Arm and Turner hated them. Green River dissolved, but there was much more to come for all.

Turner and Arm contacted Matt Lukin (bass) and Dan Peters (drums) to form Mudhoney. As Arm reflects back, he and Turner were "punk purists," although he says it with a mocking tone that speaks volumes. In fact, even though there are interviews with everyone in Mudhoney, along with plenty of friends, it is Mark Arm's recollections which are the most compelling. One example of this come when he is talking about his days on heroin, when he calls himself "a walking cliché."

"Touch Me, I'm Sick" b/w "Sweet Young Thing Ain't Sweet No More" was Mudhoney's debut single, released by Sub Pop. The "Seattle scene" was still pretty small in 1988, but that record galvanized people. Soundgarden were getting press, and recording, and there were other things going on, but that song was a huge catalyst. As Arm says, those were the band's best songs, and if this was to be their only recorded legacy, they were going to make the most of it.

Fortunately, the group continued, and the four-song *Superfuzz Bigmuff* EP followed. Those four tracks were pretty amazing also, and the EP loomed large with the audience Mudhoney were building in Europe. As the guys admit today, their full-length Sub Pop debut *Mudhoney* was not their greatest. Their strong forward progress may have reached a plateau, but it was not a bad LP by any stretch of the imagination.

Fans outside of Seattle may be unaware of just how important Mudhoney were to Sub Pop, but they were integral. *Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge* basically saved the label from bankruptcy just prior to the release of *Nevermind* by Nirvana. *The Rocket* broke some big news over the years, but one of the biggest was the cover story titled "Sub Plop." In it, the imminent demise of the label was predicted, and it was only the strong sales of Mudhoney's second album that allowed them to keep the doors open.

For their major label dalliance, Mudhoney signed with Reprise Records. Today they look back on it as something that they "survived." The song they recorded for the *Singles* soundtrack was titled "Overblown," and it said it all about what was happening during that period. Amazingly enough, they recorded three albums for Reprise, to decent sales, but clearly not platinum level. It sounds like they parted with the label amicably, or at least as close to that ideal as possible considering the situation.

One of the best things about *I'm Now* is the total honesty of the guys. There was always an integrity about Mudhoney, which probably worked against them in terms of getting rich. But they did some smart things when the record company dollars were flowing in the early '90s.

A case in point is the way they handled their recording budgets. They spent as little as possible in the studio, and split the rest. "Some of the guys put down payments on houses with that money," says Turner. They also single out a soundtrack song that they were commissioned to record. 20 years later, the story can be told. They only spent \$162 to make it. We are not informed of what they were given to record the tune, but my guess is that it was quite a bit more than \$162.

In 2002, Mudhoney returned to Sub Pop, for the release of their sixth album, *Since We've Become Translucent*. There have been two more Sub Pop albums since, *Under A Billion Suns* (2006), and *The Lucky Ones* (2008). Mark Arm fills orders in Sub Pop's warehouse between small tours these days. He seems happy. Actually the whole band seems happy, from what I can tell. They go out on the occasional tour together, and feel very fortunate to still have fans who want to see them. The biggest change over the past 25 years was the departure of Matt Lukin, after the Reprise adventure. Guy Maddison is his replacement.

The 102-minute *I'm Now* has just been released on DVD by King of Hearts Productions. There are two bonus features. The first is a 13-minute compilation of recent tour footage

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from around the world. The second is the video for the song "I'm Now."

I'm Now is certainly going to appeal to Mudhoney fans, but I hope it will be seen by others as well. In the end, it is the story of a pretty great band who somehow survived the craziest things rock and roll had to offer, with their integrity intact.

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