



STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING

I'M NOW - THE STORY OF MUDHONEY

DVD. King of Hearts Productions / MVD.

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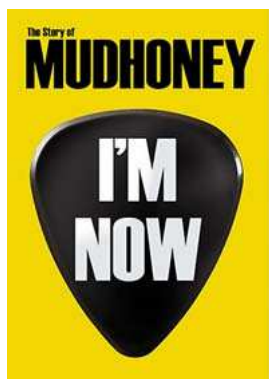
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You have to love Mudhoney, even if you don't like their music. For a band to have survived this long – over 25 years – without ever giving a single solitary shit about commercial success is remarkable. I'm not what you would call a huge fan – I've seen them live and they were great, but I don't own much of their music and rarely listen to it – but I have a lot of admiration for what they've done.

This documentary, as rough and ready and lacking in pretension as the band itself, tells the story of this rather odd collection of characters, each very different from the others, who came together out of the ashes of punk band Green River (also the source for Pearl Jam) and took their love for Iggy Pop and garage punk, fuzzed the fuck out of it and invented what would soon be known as the Seattle sound – grunge. In works of fiction, inventors become rich and famous, but in the real world, the pioneers often have to sit back and watch the bands the inspire / who copy them (delete as you see fit) rise to the top while they continue to struggle. Not that you think Mudhoney wanted it any other way, and even when they reluctantly left the struggling Sub Pop for the major label rollercoaster, they carried on much as before, recording albums quickly, cheaply and crudely (while pocketing the rest of the label advance).

In documentary terms, the band are possibly not the most dramatic of subjects. They've had struggles with heroin, sold shitloads of record and then played to tiny audiences, clashed with label bosses, lost members and made triumphant returns, but its something they seem to take in their stride – none of it is presented here in the hushed tones of the rise / fall / redemption story so beloved of documentarians (at one point, Mark Arm mocks the hushed tones and faux drama of MTV music documentaries when covering drug-induced low points in a band's career). You get the impression that Mudhoney accept that life has its ups and downs, but simply shrug them off and get on with it.

As well as band members past and present, the film features interviews with members of Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Sonic Youth, Black Flag and other seminal bands of the era, takes a few sly digs at the ruthless lust for fame and glory that Nirvana pretended they weren't into and features live Mudhoney footage that ranges from the near shambolic to the blistering, including footage of their 2009/10 tour (additional footage from Europe, Japan and Brazil fills up the extras). Ultimately though, it tells a story of a band who are still doing what they do because they love it, not because it makes money (tours now have to be fitted around day jobs). As such, it's a great film to show overly ambitious wannabe rock stars to remind them of what it's really all about.

Like the best music documentaries, **I'm Now** works regardless of whether you are a hardened fan or have never heard of Mudhoney. It's a great story, told without any pretension (beyond the black and white nature of most of the interview footage) and one well worth delving into. And it's made me want to dig those Mudhoney recordings out and give them another listen, which is always a good sign.

Oh... and if you had any doubts whatsoever that Courtney Love is a horrible, horrible person, one story here should be enough to convince you.

DAVID FLINT

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