

## Music

# The Elemental Kingdom

Leave the ego behind and the music will follow with the Yahowa 13



JEANETTE PAREDES

Djin Aquarian (right) leads his Yahowa 13 brethren in song.

By [Bret McCabe](#) | Posted 3/25/2009

## Yahowa 13, Kohoutek, Mopar Mountain Daredevils, and Moon Pie.

[Talking Head, March 26](#)

**Many paths lead to** spontaneous/improvised music. Only a few involve meat products. "He created an image--'Imagine a salami dancing,'" says Djin Aquarian, guitarist for the Yahowa 13, talking about how his spiritual/musical leader helped him shed his ego and embrace playing music without the proverbial net. "Another thing he said was, 'Let's go on a journey through an elemental kingdom.' And then he'd look at me. But that's how it was. We never made a plan."

For the past 30 years the music of the Yahowa 13--aka the Savage Sons of YaHoWa, aka Father Yod and the Spirit of '76--has entranced that segment of music heads who dig spaced-out excursions into psychedelic tapestries and krautrock tumults of infinite jams. Over nine albums recorded from 1973-'75, this outfit--sometimes a large ensemble, sometimes a core unit of guitars, drums, and bass with a kettle-drum playing vocalist--carved out a cosmic swath of exploratory sky. Guitar lines buzz and ripple. Percussion time moves from a steady tidal wash to frenetic momentum. And that voice--sometimes slightly buried in the mix--comes bellowing out with words of aphoristic genius such as "You are Jesus." These albums--released on the group's own HigherKey label--remained collectible rumors until 1999, when the Japanese label Captain Trip released a mammoth 13-CD box set of the group's entire then-available musical output, a doorstop of a cultural treasure whose title may never be outshone: *God and Hair*.

Immediately following an appreciation of the music's transporting vibe, though, typically comes the jaw-drop gasp of its backstory, involving a World War II veteran turned healthy-lifestyle guru in the 1960s, who became a spiritual leader of more than 100 followers in the 1970s before passing away following his first hang-gilding excursion in Hawaii in 1975. The man who was eventually called Yahowa--born James Baker, aka Father Yod (rhymes with "road"), more often than not referred to by Djin Aquarian simply as "Father"--started an organic, vegetarian restaurant called the Source on Sunset Boulevard in 1969; eventually, the young people who came to live and study with him became the Source Family, which splintered following Baker's death. Since then, the appearance of *God and Hair* exposed their sound and early 1970s lives to a new generation of brains, and fans have praised their music and story.

The rekindled interest in the Source Family eventually witnessed the 2007 publication of *The Source: The Untold Story of Father Yod, YaHoWa 13, and the Source Family* by two former Family members, Isis Aquarian and Electricity Aquarian. (In case it needs to be pointed out, Baker renamed the members of his extended family.) As part of the book's release, the music outfit rejoined for a string of reunion shows in Los Angeles.

"This whole thing has been a dovetailing of many different factors and it's almost like the spirit of the people bringing us two generations of fans that were born since we made all of our music," says Djin Aquarian by phone from his home in Mount Shasta, Calif. Cordial, unassuming, and extremely nice, Aquarian sounds excited to be talking about the band and Baker after all these years. "We were really surprised at all of the hullabaloo about us. We were pretty nervous. In a cosmic way, we knew it was all divinely ordained that all of this was happening, but on a personal level it was a little unnerving. We held it together, though. We were well-trained by Yahowa for spontaneous, out of the box, just anything can happen you're going to have to handle it kind of situations."

Aquarian, though, didn't start out playing that way. He entered the Family in the early '70s a more