

Book is an open door to Jim Morrison's life

By Pat Higgins

No one gets out alive, by Jerry Hopkins and Daniel Sugarman, Warner Books, 1980, 389 pages.

Jim Morrison, the legendary lead singer of the Doors, has been missing and presumed dead for over nine years. Morrison was one of the most charismatic and complex figures rock 'n' roll has ever produced. Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugarman have collaborated on a fascinating biography that reveals a lot about the mutant Lizard King. The authors admit, however, that Morrison remains an elusive and enigmatic character.

Hopkins is best known as the author of the definitive Elvis Presley biography and Sugarman was an *aide de camp* with the Doors organization. Both men were close friends of Morrison. They also extensively interviewed others close to Morrison, which provides a wealth of intriguing anecdotes concerning Morrison's personal life and describing what the Doors meant, culturally and politically.

Morrison was considered by those around him to be a virtual renaissance man: poet, singer, intellect, sex symbol and drunkard.

The Doors, as a band, were considered the most outrageous group extant, even more so than the Rolling Stones. The Doors personified anarchy, much as the Sex Pistols did in later years.

However, the difference between the Sex Pistols and the Doors was that the Doors were considered artists. The Doors were capable of arousing primal passions on stage, when at the same time, Morrison was a highly regarded poet.

Sugarman and Hopkins were able to uncover the adolescent Morrison in a very telling fashion. Morrison had a typical adolescent distaste for authority, something he never outgrew, combined with difficulties with his parents. Morrison's father was a naval officer who, coincidentally, was involved in the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

The elder Morrison demanded strict obedience from the young Jim, including hair length, which he bitterly resented. In fact, in later years, Morrison was so estranged from his parents that he would tell interviewers they were dead.

Morrison was an intellectual youth and a voracious reader strongly influenced by heavyweight poets such as William Blake and Rimbaud and philosophers Nietzsche and Sartre. At that time, Morrison wasn't interested in music and was rather chunky, which is quite surprising considering his later appeal as a sex-symbol.

Morrison seems to have digested the works of these poets and philosophers and re-invented himself in their image. For a rock star, Morrison was quite unusual in that he was a college graduate. He studied film at UCLA where his classmates included Francis Ford Coppola and Ray Manzarek.


With Manzarek, Morrison formed the core of the Doors. Youth culture at the time was a viable alternative the Doors wholeheartedly agreed with. It was not necessary to be explicitly political to threaten the status quo, unconventional life-styles were enough to be branded a revolutionary.

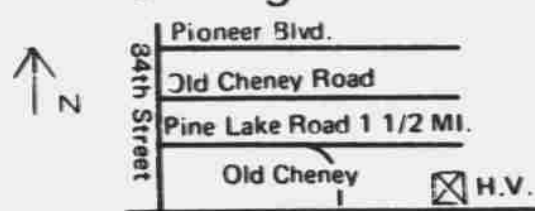
The Doors were one of the few bands ever to combine worldwide commercial success with a subversive message. The Doors genuinely believed in the youth revolution and every gesture they made was designed to antagonize the ruling structure. Doors' concerts set all-time records for audience riots which were usually provoked by a combination of Morrison and the police, each playing their role to the hilt.

The infamous Miami performance and bust was motivated by a politically ambitious district attorney claims

Hopkins and Sugarman. The DA was willing to railroad Morrison on phony charges in exchange for parental votes. Morrison, however, was certainly no innocent as he contributed to his own self destructiveness, which led directly to his alleged demise.



The authors do not appear completely convinced that Jim Morrison died on July 3, 1971 but do not offer a plausible alternative. File this book next to *Up and Down with the Rolling Stones* because it proves that the decadent rock star image is reality, not hype. Especially when compared to the corporate rock dominating today's marketplace, Morrison's passion and excitement is sorely missed.


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