

"Sound"

Muskrat Love

By Charles Lieurance

The rock 'n' roll mad hatter is a respected figure.

Jim Morrison established his cult of necrophiles through a sanguine personal life and his penchant for writhing and "wallowing in the Dionysian" while on stage.

Hasil Adkins, rockabilly loony, used to leap onto car hoods during drive-in movies and blare trumpet (!!!)-based country blues at the necking couples. This was Texas in the early '60s. Hasil Adkins is a legend now.

Ozzy Osborne eats birds. The Muskrats, Tom Freeman and Jay Rosen, play hard rock tunes and cover Anne Murray's "Snowbird" on a souped-up acoustic guitar and a washboard. They think rock is dead. To prove it they pour gasoline on their washboard and light it on fire.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins was hauled onstage in a coffin.

The Muskrats have finally turned themselves over to me for psychological evaluation. Apparently, the famous Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory is a little like the ark of the covenant to psychologists, and it took me a long time to come up with one for my excursions into that fine science. Those in the know are afraid someone might

misuse questions like, "I often must sleep over matters before I decide what to do. Sometimes. Most of the time. All the time. Never." If it fell into the wrong hand civilizations could tumble, careers could be ruined.

The average man on the street should only be confronted with such puzzlers as "Often I cross the street in order not to meet someone I see" when in the presence of a professional.

I finally managed to come up with one of the beasts through the psychological black market. Some deranged Freudian with a chip on his shoulder sold me one in a parking garage.

The Muskrats were more than willing to submit to testing. Perhaps years in bands specializing in the sort of weirdness most people flee from, the Omaha synth-joke band The Better Beatles (Jay was drummer), and Tom's band Incubus, for instance, have rattled them enough to seek help. But help sought them.

First, a case history: The Muskrats hung around Omaha for about four years before they left for the paisley pastures of San Francisco, seeking fame, fortune, an audience, clean underthings . . .

Now, their album. It's an apparently sane effort. Acoustic guitars, Kingston Trio vocals straight out of early '60s Greenwich Village, cover of a Dylan tune, cover of a traditional Negro spiritual . . . it all masks something rodent-like, the cornered Muskrat crying for help. But there's "Snowbird" tucked into side one, a Freudian slip as it were, a glitch in the Rorschach, an inadvertent confession of instability.

Live, the world is their institution. Not unlike the plays the Marquis De Sade used to perform for the inmates of the institution he was incarcerated in, Muskrat live shows

send the audience into either fits of catatonic disbelief or manic bedlam.

"Johnny was a schoolboy when he heard his first Muskrat song . . ."

So it begins. Uh-oh, here it comes. "We've got a thing that we call Muskrat Love . . ."

Geez. Jay Rosen has his guitar pinned to the dance floor. It's like all-star wrestling. It's trying to get up, but, oh, a quick blow to the neck. The guitar's stunned. But it starts screaming again, twisting. . . .

1. Once in awhile I think of things too bad to talk about.

Jay: Not too often.
Tom: Yeah. But it doesn't stop me from talking.

2. Evil spirits possess me at times.

Jay: When I'm thinking about things too bad to talk about.

Tom: On stage.
3. My soul sometimes leaves my body.

Jay: Only on TV.
Tom: Is it that obvious?

4. I have not lived the right kind of life.

Tom: It is that obvious.
Jay: Who says I don't?

5. Sometimes I tease animals.
Jay: Especially turtles and slugs.

6. I would like to be a nurse.
Jay: Yes. And be nice and tease slugs.

Tom: I would like to be nursed.
7. Often I feel as if there were a tight band about my head.

Jay: I've never been in a tight band.

8. I do not worry about catching diseases.

Tom: Only spreading them.
9. I have the wanderlust and am never happy unless I am roaming or traveling about.

Jay: Unless I'm asleep.
10. Someone has been trying to poison me.

Tom: Yes, and they succeeded.

Jay: My own car tried to poison me.

11. The top of my head sometimes feels tender.

Jay: See Tom.
Tom: Every time I get close to Lincoln.

(Note: Last time the Muskrats played at the Drumstick in Lincoln their van crashed on the Platte River bridge by Ashland. Tom's head was split open in the accident, and his shoulder was dislocated. The van was totaled. Jay was unharmed ("Physically, Tom adds). According to Tom, they have returned to prove a point.

12. There are people who are trying to steal my thoughts and ideas.

Tom: Yes. I pity the fools.
Jay: What thoughts and ideas.

13. I believe my sins are unpardonable.

Jay: Pardon me.
14. It does not bother me particularly to see animals suffer.

Tom: Quite the contrary, being a muskrat and all.

15. I believe there is a devil and a hell in afterlife.

Tom: We've got him in the van. We captured him.

Jay: Ask the experts.
16. Sometimes at elections I vote for men about whom I know very little.

Tom: Yeah, it's true. If I like the sound of their names, it's the least I can do. I always do the least I can do.

Jay: I don't know anybody.
17. I can easily make other people afraid of me and sometimes do for the fun of it.

Jay: Who's afraid of me? I'll tell you who. The slugs are afraid of me.

18. I have numbness in one or more regions of my skin.

Tom: Doesn't everyone?
19. Someone has control over my mind.

Tom: Yea. It changes from night

to night. Tonight someone in Utah has control of it.

20. I drink an unusually large amount of water every day.

Jay: I do, too.
21. I liked "Alice in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll.

Jay: I like Alice Cooper.
Tom: I'd like to have Alice in the van.

22. I get all the sympathy I should.

Jay: No one should feel sorry for me. I'm in one of today's leading rock bands.

23. Peculiar odors come to me at times.

Tom: Like a magnet.
24. At times I hear so well it bothers me.

Jay: A long time ago. Now, I'm in one of today's leading rock bands.

25. I forget right away what people say to me.

Jay: What?
26. I hear strange things when I'm alone.

Jay: Hunh?
Tom: Or when I'm with someone.

27. I very seldom have spells of the blues.

Jay: I very seldom have spells at all.

Tom: I use reds more often.
28. Horses that don't pull should be beaten or kicked.

Tom: And we're just the band to do it.

29. I used to have imaginary companions.

Tom: I have Jay.
30. I believe that a person should never taste an alcoholic drink.

Tom: You won't taste it after long. Is gasoline included?

31. I am fascinated by fire.

Tom: As long as it's not in the van.
32. I am a special agent of God.

Tom: Gadzooks.
Jay: Everybody else works for K.A.O.S. Now I'm going into my cone of silence.



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n. (1) Faith seeking understanding.
(2) Responsible interpretation of God's word and action in history.

for lunch*

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