

Wolfman Jack worth the wait

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head is grinning, displaying a lovely set of fangs. "Hi, how you all?" says the head, and then it is gone down the hall.

A flurry of activity erupts. "Was that him? I swear it was! He's here! Yahoo!"

The crowd stampedes down the hall and into the tiny studio and, sure enough, there is Wolfman Jack, resplendent in black paisley shirt and black goatee and fat turquoise jewelry and high heeled shoes.

The Wolfman wastes no time. He parks himself behind a maze of switches and dials and knobs and buttons and tapes. He listens intently as deejay Chuck Holloway explains the workings of the board, and then he launches into his warmup routine, arms pumping in the air, eyeballs bulging, teeth clenched.

Wolfman Jack is ON THE AIR!

A moan, a wolf call, a snarl, and then he slides into the intro — "You and me on ROV." The Rolling Stones are belting out "Brown Sugar" over the airwaves and the Wolfman is leading cheers in the jam-packed studio, pumping his arms, snarling, clapping. The crowd is going bananas.

A secretary—the buxom Bubbles LaGum—slides in next to the Wolfman and he whispers in her ear. She leans close to the microphone and purrs, "I luv ya, Wolfman."

The Wolfman cackles happily. He loves to be loved, especially on the air: "Oh, baby, we shippin' it out tonight!"

Wolfman Jack is cooking. "Hey, hey," he yells into the mike. "All you people out there c'mon down and boogie with me. We're havin' a party. C'mon down to WROV and boogie with the Wolfman."

The studio executives are holding their heads. They know what happens now. In a matter of minutes, all kinds of loons will be beating on the station's doors, demanding to boogie with the Wolfman. They are not wrong. A crowd gathers outside almost immediately.

The Wolfman, of course, is oblivious. He is occupied with the phone. He is as busy as a bookie on Super Bowl Day.

He switches from one caller to another, slinging them a fast rap and then bouncing to another line. He pauses with one caller. It is a young girl. She is in the hospital. The Wolfman's face becomes solemn. "Nothin' serious, is it?" he asks.

"I don't know," the girl replies nervously.

"I've been here four days." She giggles nervously.

The Wolfman's face lights up. "Hey, that's nice. Willya do that again? Willya giggle for me, please?"

The girl's high-pitched giggle comes across the speaker.

The Wolfman is beaming. "Hey, that's great," he says. "Glad ta see ya laughin', baby."

He punches a button and another record begins to play. It was a nice moment. The Wolfman is actually human. He made somebody feel better.

The show goes on. It was supposed to last an hour, but the Wolfman is pumped up. He adds an extra half-hour to the performance. The hourly news broadcast is bypassed. When Wolfman Jack is at the controls, things get very loose in the studio. He is wailing and yowling between records. "Oh, baby, I loooove ya in yer skin tight britches."

He slips in a plug for Friday night's civic center extravaganza. Guess Who. Wet Willie. And, of course, the one-and-only-Wolfman-Jack-Live. On stage. "Party time," he promises.

At the end of the 90-minute stint, the Wolfman is looking haggard. Hair mussed. Digging his fists in his eyeballs. Voice slightly hoarser than usual, but he is still rolling out the one liners, eyeballing the chicks, mugging for the cameras. The Wolfman is wired, and all he's drinking is straight Coke.

At the end of the show, the Wolfman abruptly sheds his earphones, lights a cigarette and forges through the crowd which has closed in around the control board.

He is off again. Off to shake hands and sign autographs and conduct fragmented interviews. Off to soothe the multitudes who have gathered outside the studio to "boogie with the Wolfman."

Physically, he is not as tall and not as fat as he's supposed to be. Maybe 5-10 and 170 pounds. But he is still pumped up, exuding energy and confidence and pleasant vibes as he gladhands his way through his adoring fans.

Finally, he makes it to the limousine, which will transport him to the King's Inn for more adulation, more handshaking, more fannypatting.

For some stars, it would be a grind. But for Wolfman Jack, alias Big Smith, it appears to be a labor of love.

2 specialists rescue deer