

Wolfman Jack flies high, far and nonstop

By MIKE IVES
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It is one of those parties where everybody is nervous. They keep casting glances out the window into the darkness, flicking their cigarettes, nervously sipping their drinks, drumming their fingers on the table and jogging their legs.

Yes indeed, it is one of those kind of parties. Everybody is present except the guest of honor, Panic City.

The party is being staged in the normally staid offices of WROV-Roanoke's rock 'n' roll music station. The festivities are being held in honor of Wolfman Jack.

Who? Wolfman Jack, you say? Just who is Wolfman Jack?

Indeed, an explanation is in order.

Wolfman Jack was not always Wolfman Jack. Once upon a time he was a stagestruck Brooklyn kid by the name of Bob Smith. He spent his formative years with a radio pressed against his earhole. Life out there on the streets of Brooklyn was a bummer, but the radio was Bob Smith's salvation. Deejays and rock 'n' roll music were Bob Smith's reality.

He floated right through Dwight D. Eisenhower and the lackluster 1950s with that radio glued to his eardrums.

Bill Haley and Chuck Berry and Little Richard and yes, even old Jerry Lee Lewis. That's where the music came from in the 50s. And Bob Smith, well, he ended up in Shreveport, La., at station WYOU. They called him Big Smith down there in Shreveport while he was perfecting his style.

And then Big Smith gravitated to Viacuna, Mexico. He had been messing around with weird throat noises and oddball raps, and by the time he hit station XERF in Mexico, Big Smith had metamorphosed into the one and only Wolfman Jack—a certified loon.

According to one source, Wolfman Jack took over XERF with guns, barbed wire and a machine gun. Locked the owner right out in the street and began beaming his personal brand of madness right into the hearts and minds of all those malleable teen-agers on the West Coast of the United States of America. Horatio Alger in a black cape and fake fangs.

The Wolfman ventured north to Minneapolis and then south again to Tijuana, moaning

and snarling his way into the upper echelons of American deejaydom.

And then along came a film called "American Graffiti." Wolfman Jack had a fat part in that movie. He played himself, naturally, and when the box office returns started rolling in. Wolfman Jack was, and is, a national celebrity.

He has his own syndicated radio show, and he is host of the "Midnight Special" on TV and does pimple cream commercials and Lord knows what else, and right about now Wolfman Jack is in Fat City.

But last night, as the clock hands inched toward 9 p.m., Wolfman Jack was a no show. He was supposed to go on the air from WROV's studios at 9:05, and here it was almost the magic hour and the Wolfman was missing in action.

And so it is that we have a roomful of basket cases in the offices of WROV, clutching their drinks and flicking their cigarettes and drumming their fingers on the table.

And then—BAM—precisely at 9, a bearded gargoyle head pops through the open door. The



Wolfman Jack

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