

More Stories!

Forum

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The Wraymen

by Jon Hynes

Our band was hired to play for one of those typical college fraternity party gigs. Hearing there was a band playing at the fraternity house next door, we decided to go and see them. We asked around and were told it was the Wraymen. I don't think any of us recognized the name of the group at that point. We had worked our way through the large crowd until we got right up on top of the bandstand. We wanted to get up close so as to not miss anything.

Oh No! After all that effort only to find they were on break.

We looked around at the instruments on the bandstand. We certainly weren't impressed at all with what we saw. Just a bunch of beat-up instruments and amplifiers. The guitar player's amp was an old Fender with the grill cloth ripped off and the speaker cones completely missing from the speakers. We wondered how he could make any sound at all. There was a set of drums with all the bottom heads missing, a beat-up keyboard and Leslie amp, a bass guitar and amp and a big old metal outdoor horn speaker sitting on the floor over in the right side of the stage which we thought was their P.A. Speaker. We were looking at each other with disbelief of what we saw in front of us, laughing and making comments to each other.

As it got nearer to the time for us to get back from our break and play again, we wondered if we dared to stay any longer or just get back to our job. The Wraymen had been on break for what seemed an eternity and we wondered if they had split from their job. We knew these guys were supposed to be somewhat famous, but that didn't mean they were any good. Oh what a pathetic looking group of musical equipment and instruments was set up there. We just wondered how they could have possibly even gotten that gig in the first place.

At long last they finally came back from break. They didn't look any more professional than their instruments had

looked. They looked dirty and as if they were hoods from a street gang. Maybe even dangerous.

Then they started to play their theme song, and the singer introduced the members of the band. I can still remember that catchy melody to this day even though only having heard it just that one time. The group was Extremely loud. Then . . . the guitar chimed in, completely drowning out the rest of the band. The singer was jumping and screaming into his tiny mike as loud as he could, the drummer jumping way up into the air and coming down slamming on his drums beating them as hard as he could over and over to the beat of the guitar, and the bass and organ looked as if they were still playing just as loud as they could.

Unbelievable! I had become completely paralyzed because of that extreme volume. The ONLY thing that could be heard was the guitar playing through that crummy amp that turned out to be hooked up to the outdoor metal Horn speaker which made all the distorted ear shattering noise.

With the volume of Link's guitar, the rest of the group might as well not have been there except for the visual effect. None of them could be heard at all, not even a whisper from the drums.

I've heard some really loud groups in my lifetime, but nothing that compared or even came close to the volume of Link Wray and the Wraymen.

Seeing them was an experience I won't soon forget, even though close to 50 years have passed since then. And yes, they were very good and worth all that physical pain and discomfort.

1958, Rumble: Archie Bleyer the owner of Cadence Records found an acetate and grabbed it to play for his 17-year-old daughter 's Birthday party. The kids at the party flipped out. The daughter named the song Rumble because it reminded her of the gang street fight scene in West Side Story. It was an instant success and sold millions of records.

1959, Rawhide: Link recorded the instrumental Rawhide which was a million seller for Epic Records.

Jack the Ripper and other big hits were also added to his fame and popularity.

Fredrick Lincoln Wray Jr.

May 2, 1928 – November 5, 2005

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