

## Lost In Thyme Found On EBay

It started as a strange whisper and a true passing reference. A lost Yukon rock group?

Four guys, six records, a suitably psychedelic name and a shining moment in the sun.

This was *Cranberry Thyme*.

Was it all a dream?

I found them online and, in just under a week, a package was in my trembling hands. Groovy vinyl overload.

*Cranberry Thyme* was a going concern from 1966 to 1970 and I now had them on my turntable.

None of the albums escaped life without patina of crackle. These albums were lovingly listened to over and over then slipped into a shelf and entombed for years before I found them online.

It's a lot like an Indiana Jones movie: the treasure ends up where it needs to be. Now they are mine. All mine.

If your ears demand a 12-string jangle, this sound is for you. Guitars in the capable hands of Fitzgerald McKinney (who is often heard mumbling in the background of the album, "Key? What key?") and David Mark, a roving bass played by Fulton Casey and a swinging back beat handled by drummer Nicholas Ptarmigan III, named paradigm of the year by Downbeat Magazine.

*Yukon Sun Beam* was the first LP by "The Thyme". From the cover, you can see the edge of the forest in these boys' eyes. Full of sparkly treble, the overtones seem to hold the entire sound together in a big warm glow. Pioneering sound for a rocking teenage combo North of Sixty.

With the Summer of Love came an enthusiastic foray into the foggy realm of psychedelic music. Over a two-week period in July of that year, Sgt Preston's *Grinning Detachment* was recorded at the Palace Grand Theatre in Dawson City.

The highlight of the album is *Outside Me Not Including You*, the magnum opus featuring the sitar, Mellotron, Djimbe orchestra and player piano. Surprisingly the theatre had all the instruments on hand minus the player piano; hauled to Dawson for the session.

It is a song that would be reheard often in a famous cat food commercial throughout the 1980's cashing in on the upscale pet food market. The basic

track has been used recently in the health care industry when it was found to reduce the need for colon cleansers and emetics in severe poisoning cases.

If revolution was the name of the game in 1968, then its album *Boreal Confusion* was a call to action. Full of fuzz and flange, *Kombucha Colony* spoke to their idealism. The echo processed vocal creates the sensation of being underwater while thudding heartbeats keeps you from drowning in phlegm.

It wasn't so much a Spectorian "wall of sound", but a veritable "wall of sludge", a sound that would not be popular at all until the 1990's.

*Free Fitzgerald McKinney* was a postmodern rock opera that bordered on pretence. The themes were too introspective even for an audience seeking a deeper truth in music. McKinney told Rolling Stone in a 1969 interview, "I can't remember what we were thinking. It seemed to make some sense at the time."

Even so, the infamous English filmmaker Guy Grand filmed a version that played to many a smoke-filled art house theatre to no real acclaim, It has recently been re-mastered for DVD and to date is continues to lose its producers great amounts of money.

Made on a shoestring budget, *Back to the Backwoods*, recorded in mono in a cabin "down the Atlin road" was an attempt to capture an ecological ethos consuming the culture at the time. *Relief in Green* was the single and had minor success during the 1970 party season.

By 1972, they had changed their name to *Cranberry Mastodon*, an attempt to cash in on a new heavy progressive blues sound. The album, *Dredge*, was described as "not quite a stew and too heavy for soup".

Fulton Casey, by this time, had a girlfriend whom he insisted be allowed to join the group to play the spoons. When asked would she be joining the group on tour, David mark said,"Oh no."

In a move to counter this intrusion by perceived outside forces, the other members all brought in their girlfriends to play on the album and in a twist of fate, the women were able to turn this collaboration into a popular lecture series entitled "They Were Never Really That Big".

Apart from minor airplay on college FM, their hope of renewal was resigned to bargain bins and eventually eclectic collectors like me.

I have been searching high and low for any information regarding this band. It is as if they never existed. Any information or photos of *Cranberry Thyme* forwarded to me will be posted at my website, [strangethingsdone.com](http://strangethingsdone.com)

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