

The Life and Times of Graham

by Gisèle Marie Baxter

Review: "High Times", The Best of Graham Parker and the Rumour

The season to be jolly is approaching, and the greatest hits compilations are rolling off the presses like the seasonal commodity they are. Amid the usual assortment of high exposure pop artists this

year, is the incomparable Graham Parker. It has been a hard climb up for the former gas pump attendant, but GP and his wonderful band, the Rumour, have moved up from the British pub rock scene to a comfortable measure of international success. Maybe their records don't earn triple platinum status, but they do have a strong, loyal base of support.

High Times features a good cross section of Parker's work over the past four years. These thirteen tracks showcase the man's rough edged, passionate voice in a variety of settings: solid rock ("Stick to Me"), rhythm and blues ("Kansas City"), soul ("Hold Back the Night"), and reggae edged blues ("Hey Lord"), as well as classic pop. The lyrics are excellent examples of

Parker's perception, compassion and razor sharp wit. Of course, we have here the Rumour at its finest as it propels the songs and Parker's guitar playing along in a consistently arresting fashion.

Of all the musicians and bands to come up from the pub rock scene, Parker and the Rumour have probably remained about the closest to the pub spirit. All of their work

Christmas shopping for the record buyer

by Rob Cohnhead

Every year at about this time the record companies spring on us what they like to call their Christmas releases.

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Generally these are records by some of their top artists (sales wise) and if they don't have any new material ready a "Live" or "Greatest Hits" or even a combination of the two are shoved down our throats:

The Best of Emerson Lake and Palmer
Golden Hits of Boney M
Graham Parker High Times
The Best of Valdy
The Eagles Live
Fleetwood Mac Live
Kenny Loggins Alive

and last but not least

Heart—Greatest Hits / Live

This is just a part and not all of what they're trying to sell us. Actually, some of those are even worthwhile compared to the other junk on the market.

We're also lucky(?) this year to get new releases from people that we haven't heard from in a while, foremost among them is John and Yoko's **Double Fantasy**. As it turns out, this is the last new material that we will have from John.

Others include:

Alan Parsons—The Turn of a Friendly Card
Downchild—Road Fever
Dire Straights—Making Movies
The Frank Mills LP
Doobies—One Step Closer
Harry Chapin—Sequel
Yes—Drama

More George Thoroughgood and the Destroyers

Also we must mention the **Rovers** (formerly the **Bay City Rovers**) whose comeback LP is a pleasant surprise. The new single is tearing up the charts. The standout record belongs to **Bruce Springsteen, The River**. We've waited so long, it's a good thing that it came out around Christmas because it's quite a present.

In the New Tricks from Old Dogs Category we have:

Donna Summer—The Wanderer
Dr. Hook—Rising
ABBA—Super Trouper
Rod Stewart—Foolish Behaviour.

From the New Wave category we have the largest slate of new releases, which is only fair since it is the fastest growing category.

Blondie—Auto American
Rockpile—Seconds of Pleasure
Joe Jackson—Beat Crazy
Inmates—Shot in the Dark
Madness—Absolutely
Police—Zenyatta Mondatta
Talking Heads—Remain in Light
Pat Benatar—Crimes Of Passion

These are just the best of the crop. I'm sorry that I left out the 127 others, I just didn't have room.

From our Canadiana Collection we have from the West coast:

Shari Ulrich—Long Nights
The Claire Lawrence Band
Valdy—1001

and across Canada we have:

Helix—Breaking Loose
Dutchy Mason—Special Brew
The Best of Ian Thomas

Martha and the Muffins—Trance and Dance

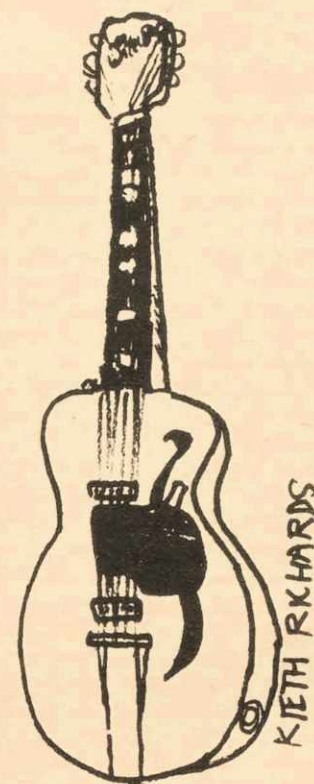
And last but not least, no Christmas list would be complete without a selection of Movie Soundtracks. This year's crop is more bleak than our weather:

Neil Diamond—The Jazz Singer
Paul Simon—One Trick Pony
Times Square

What a drag!

Well, I'm not going to tell you what to buy because you know what you like. I just wanted you to know what you have to contend with in terms of new releases. We won't even talk about what's coming in January.

That's when the record companies stage their post-Christmas blitz to relieve you of any excess funds.



has a "live" feeling, and the live tracks are inspired. This music is less complex and subtle than that of Elvis Costello or Joe Jackson (who sing somewhat like GP), but it achieves artistic validity in its own uncompromising way.

Whether you're discovering Parker with this record or are a GP fanatic, this compilation has a number of special treats. Two songs, covers of the rhythm and blues classics "Hold Back the Night" and "Kansas City", are from albums which are now unavailable. The latter was recorded live, and in it Parker introduces the band with flair to an appreciative crowd. My favorite of the older songs is the romantic, impassioned ballad "Gypsy Blood". The earlier albums are well represented, but so is "Squeezing Out Sparks", one of 1979's classic records. From this come three songs, including "Discovering Japan", written about Parker's tour of a country which fascinated him.

The centerpiece of **High Times** is, for me, the first song, a live version of what must be Parker's signature tune, "Hey Lord Don't Ask Me Questions". Over a driving reggae flavoured blues / rock beat, Parker describes a confrontation between the rock singer and his audience: between the individual and society. He recognizes that so much is going wrong, and he can't quite understand it but he wants very much to help. Yet he can't. And so he remains confronted with the problem of the musician's responsibility to the audience. ("I stand up for liberty / But I can't liberate / A pent-up agony / I see it take first place.") The rendition has an incredible power, and the audience reaction is like an affirmation.

Parker deserves it. **High Times** is a sampling of some of the best so far. Four years from now, there should be more than enough material for another volume.