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# THE ROCK DOCTORS HOT WAX ALBUM REVIEWS – WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

By **John Kereiff Features - Music Reviews & Get Off My Lawn!** -




***ROOMING HOUSE* Charlie Parr (Smithsonian Folkways) *****+**

Every now and again an album will come along that stops me in my tracks, and *Rooming House* is one of 'em.  Haunting and billed as a 'folk opera', it combines bleak desperation and hope in an affecting series of songs inspired by Charlie Parr's own desperation. "I've got a few guitars and a big record collection, so I started selling stuff off to be able to pay off this dental bill."

I'm a sucker for acoustic blues and the stories Parr tells in these songs really hit home, one after the other.  He moved from Austin to Minneapolis in the 80's, landing in rooming houses, and that is a part of this album's story.  "I loved them so much" he says, "I really did.  It was just a really interesting, wonderful bunch of people that I got to know.  It felt like this strange family.  You had a cross section of everybody in these houses."  In *Rooming House* it feels like we're getting to know some of these people too.  You can picture the people, the shared kitchens.

*Rooming House* is elemental in its sound, Charlie's voice and guitar plus percussion from Dave King.  It's the perfect combination for covering a desperate scene that he describes in the liner notes; "These folks here in this record have no idea what's wrong.  Or how to help. I know people who can't afford to see a doctor.  I've heard them talk about 'toughing it out' or seeking advice about home remedies that will never work.  I have a friend who knows someone who does his own dental work."

*Rooming House* is not some flashy blues extravaganza, it's a song cycle about real people living in desperate times… something many of us are never too far away from.  This is one of the best albums of the year.

www.charlieparr.com

HOT TRACKS:  *Duluth 2026, Rooming House, (What's So Funny About) Universal Healthcare*