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THE BEAT

Using His Religion

Parker Millsap taps his years in the Pentecostal church for inspiration

BY DAVID KNOWLES

After spending the first 18 years of his life attending an Oklahoma Pentecostal church, Parker Millsap has finally found his calling. On his self-titled album, released on Okrahoma Records, Millsap growls about the church he's left behind on such songs as "Old Time Religion" in a voice that owes as much to the preachers he watched in the pulpit as it

does to Tom Waits or Howlin' Wolf. "A lot of Pentecostal preachers, they yell a lot, and they're pretty active onstage, and, as far as the voice, I think that's where a lot of it comes from," Millsap says.

Given that he grew up singing in church, the fact that much of his new record is infused with religious themes should come as no surprise. "Any time you

grow up in something it's bound to come out in your work," he says. "When you spend 18 or 19 years going to church three times a week, it's bound to come out [in song]."

"Lately my writing hasn't been maybe as influenced by that, at least the songs that I've recorded since the album. It's definitely important, but I'm trying to make it

not the only thing that I'm capable of writing about."

Growing up in the tiny town of Purcell, Oklahoma, Millsap says he convinced his parents to buy him a \$70 nylon-string guitar when he was seven. "I messed with it for a week and then put it away, and when I was nine I started taking lessons. After a year or two of that, I thought, OK, I think this is what I want to do."

These days he's upgraded to a 2005 Martin OM-21 and a 1952 Gibson LG-1, which he tunes to an

open E. His guitars in tow, he'll soon be hitting the road with a stand-up bass and fiddle player to promote the new album, but he hasn't traded in religion for music altogether.

"I still love all the people that I grew up with in the church," he says, "but at a certain point I just got tired of feeling guilty for everything. You have to weigh how can you live and feel good about yourself and still be following a set of rules that maybe is a little bit unrealistic."

'When you spend 18 or 19 years going to church three times a week, it's bound to come out [in song].'

—PARKER MILLSAP

DONOVAN DUE AT BEATLES FEST



Sixties icon **Donovan** will headline this year's New York edition of the Fest, a convention dedicated to all things **Beatles**. The three-day event, which will be held February 7–9 at the Grand Hyatt hotel, also will feature the **Smithereens, Chad & Jeremy**, and a host of authors who have penned books on the Fab Four. Visit thefest.com for tickets.

JAVIER LIMON'S WORLD VIEW



Spanish guitar legend **Javier Limon**, who is the artistic director at Berklee College of Music's Mediterranean Music Institute in Boston, teamed up on his new album, *Promesas de Tierra*, with young composers from Israel and Palestine who study at the esteemed music school. In the liner notes, Limon writes the collaboration represents "a new trend towards cultural diversity in contemporary roots music." Within days of its release in November, the album hit No. 1 on iTunes in Spain.



John Prine Undergoes Cancer Surgery

Singer-songwriter **John Prine** was forced to reschedule a series of December shows due to his ongoing battle with cancer. "There's nothing I hate more than canceling shows," Prine said in a statement posted to his website. "I've been diagnosed with non-small cell carcinoma of the lung. Doctors here in Nashville have caught it early, and it is operable. They see no reason why I won't fully recover."

In 1998, Prine underwent radiation therapy after being diagnosed with squamous cancer cells in his right cheek. The treatments caused his voice to sound deeper and more gravelly.

Prine rescheduled two Louisville, Kentucky, shows on February 28 and March 1. Dates in Madison, Wisconsin, originally slated for November, have not yet been booked for 2014.



Guitars for Swaziland

A partnership between the U.S. State Department's Arts Envoy Program, Fender Guitars, and Austin, Texas, musicians is putting acoustic guitars in the hands of orphaned children in the Kingdom of Swaziland. In a trial run in November, 20 Fender guitars were delivered to the kids in the tiny South African nation, many of whose parents have died in the country's AIDS epidemic. "The U.S. is really doing some good things over there," says **Stephen Doster**, the founder of the program.

This year, Doster adds, the program hopes to ship hundreds more guitars to the country. Donations to the program can be made at guitarsforswaziland.com.

Pants for Parkinson's

They're pants for a good cause. Retro-rocker **Willie Nile** has teamed up with Stitch's Jeans to create a pair of custom black-denim pants, the proceeds of which will go to the Light of Day Foundation, which funds research for Parkinson's disease. "I want to give people who can't come to the shows an opportunity to support a great cause and get involved," Nile notes. "To be able to offer fans a unique, stylized pair of pants I designed with Stitch's and have all the purchase money, not just the net proceeds, go to the cause is extraordinary."

The pants can be purchased online for a \$200 donation at www.Lightofday.org/stichs.