



Graham Parker, Bob Andrews

Graham Parker says his Australasian tour was "a bit of a holiday, really". Only nine dates were played in Oz, and two in New Zealand. But even so, he was pushed for time, and was forced to speak to *Rip It Up* while driving to Auckland Airport to catch his Wellington gig.

After a round of seemingly endless frustrations, things are at last looking up from Graham Parker and the Rumour. While acceptance in this part of the world and in the Old Country has never been in doubt, the key to success in the lucrative American market has been hard to find.

"I don't know where the young kids are at in America these days," says Graham. "To me they just seem completely stupid. Y'know, kids who go to see bands like Journey and Rush and Kiss aren't going to come and see us. Our audiences there are older than they are in England."

The problem stemmed not only from attitudes, but also from the less-than-satisfactory handling of Parker product by his American distributor, Mercury Records, to which the infamous "Mercury Poisoning" is dedicated. All US distribution has now switched to Arista.

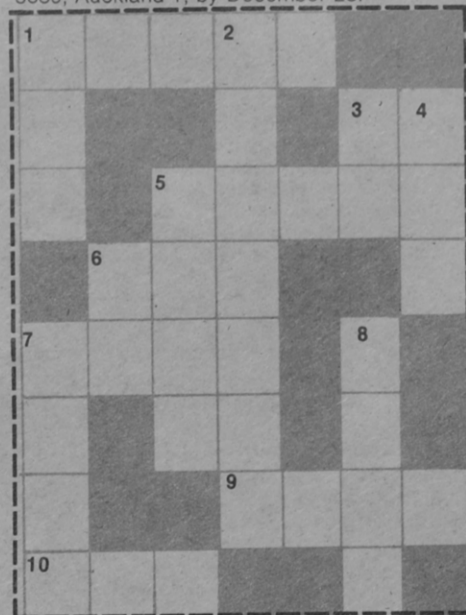
"Mercury was a major problem, but not the only one," says Graham. "The main problem was being there ahead of our time, as strange as that may sound. There was no audience ready for what we were doing when we went, and we bashed our head against a wall for two tours."

"But there was no record company support either. Mercury weren't good enough, useless in fact. They rely on luck to sell records, they just didn't understand a group like us at all."

## VIRGIN CROSSWORD

The first correct entry in the Virgin crossword opened on Dec 28 will win the set of five \$7.99 releases from Virgin Records and a giant colour Members poster. The next five correct entries will win one \$7.99 Virgin and a poster and the following 40 correct entries will all win a Members poster. (All the answers are in this mag or obvious, have a go.)

Post your completed entry to *RIU*, PO Box 5689, Auckland 1, by December 28.



- ACROSS**
- The Ruts' album is titled *The* ....
  - Members' rhythm guitarist Jean-Marie Carroll is known as ...
  - The surname of the Members' frontman is ....
  - John Lydon's current band is ...
  - The single "Babylon's Burning" is by The ....
  - Virgin's Akron signing is Jane ....
  - Cowboys International debut is titled *The Original* ...

- DOWN**
- Their single is "Making Plans for Nigel". To fit, spell ... backwards
  - It all happened At *The* ..... Nightclub.
  - He (...) wrote the "Stand Up and Spit" tune.
  - Their unlikely name is ... boys International.
  - The stand-out track on *Some Product/Carri On Sex Pistols* is "Big .... Over America".
  - The album's called *The Crack*, the band is The ....
  - The band is Fingerprintz and their debut album is titled *The* .... Dab.

"*Squeezing Out Sparks* was more successful because of a combination of the audience being more ready, plus us being more ready ourselves, playing a bit differently, and Arista."

## DEPRESSING

The American experience was a depressing one at first, because Parker could see a potential audience, especially in places like New York and LA, but he wasn't reaching them due to lack of proper promotion.

"Mercury completely screwed us up, they wouldn't let us off, so we didn't go back until *Squeezing Out Sparks* was finished. "We did a three-month tour then, and the reaction was really amazing, it went uphill all the way. Now we've got an audience. We can sell out the Paladium in New York two months before we get there."

*Squeezing Out Sparks* was a breakthrough for Parker in more ways than one, being an important departure from the sound established on the first three albums.

"It was a very important album to me," he says. "It was like *Howlin' Wind*. That and *Squeezing Out Sparks* have something that's more magical than the other two, even though they were still good records."

"*Squeezing Out Sparks* was like starting again for us really, after doing *Parkerilla*, which sort of summed up the live performance over two pretty fast years."

"There are no numbers like "Heat Treatment" on *Squeezing Out*, all the songs have something to say. Some people are probably depressed out of their minds by it, with songs about abortions and "Saturday Night Is Dead", when all they want to do is rage and have a good time. But that was the way I wrote the

songs, I can't really help it."

## UNITY

The songs were written over a long period of time, and yet they have an indefinable unity to them. Graham agrees, but is unable to say what holds them together.

"I had more time to write, which is good, because we had the live album out, which took a bit of pressure off me. And the songs just came naturally."

"It is a complete album to me, it has that total link from beginning to end. It must have been some train of thought, but I don't really know."

*Parkerilla* was an album that had to be made, as a statement of where the band stood at a particular time, leaving the way clear for the new directions in *Squeezing Out Sparks*. Graham now admits it was less than perfect.

"When we were doing it, I thought it was great. But Bob (Andrews) expressed a few doubts about it and said the recording was not really very good, but I disagreed and decided we had to put the thing out."

"I wanted a live album out because people wanted it. It sold a lot around the world, in places where we'd never been known before. Now, looking back on it, I think there are only a few tracks which really sound great, like "Playhouse" and "Questions."

"It's not as good as some of the gigs we've done. Most gigs, if they're recorded properly, any night of the week, are better than *The Parkerilla*. It was a hit and miss affair. What we could afford to record, we recorded."

## HORNS DROPPED

The decision to drop the horn section was made while preparing for the *Squeezing Out*

*Sparks* sessions. It became apparent that the songs didn't need embellishing. Since the subsequent tours have featured that album, it was decided to leave the horns out of the live show as well. Older numbers were rearranged to accommodate this.

"I've never written songs for brass, it's just something that got lumped onto me. I enjoyed it because nobody else was doing it at the time."

"I think the new arrangements of the old stuff are better, really. I've never been a great fan of brass. They were a great brass section and a good bunch of blokes to work with, but it was never a really big thing for me."

"I think the stage show now is more dynamic, more economical. It's a breath of fresh air, really."

## FUTURE

Future plans are being left as open as possible. The Rumour are due to record a new album next month, and Graham goes back into the studio in January. In keeping with practice, he's not saying too much about the new work, though two numbers are being played in the current live set.

But after a very solid year of touring, he's looking forward to a rest.

"I'm not planning anything for next year. Touring drains you, there's no doubt about it. We've had to do it because we've needed to show people what we can do. It's great, but you've got to stop and look at yourself now and again, which I haven't done at all this year. With the time I've had off I've never relaxed because you're planning, you're thinking, you're rehearsing."

"So we'll have a break, and everyone in the band can concentrate on recording and writing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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**THE**  
**FARM**

