

ELLY PARKER – “Life Gets Better” (The Hermit’s Music)

Life Gets Better launches with the title track, an acoustic blues number immediately showcasing Parker’s smooth and characterful vocal. Featuring silky fiddle playing from **Tom Neville**, the optimistic lyric concerns living life to the max, and in the moment, not pointlessly dwelling in a realm of past regrets. His fiddle also contributing beautifully to the later *Peter Peter*, Neville then turns his evidently skilled hand(s) to the mandolin on the country-flavoured *Dance*, a lovely shuffling song that could have landed on Vancouver Island directly from Appalachia.

With its ‘shooby-doo-wah’-style backing vocals by **Lorraine Baron**, *Hot Day in the City* is a stylistic shift into late-50s/early 60s vocal group territory, also featuring a fluidly crisp solo from veteran guitarist extraordinaire, **Glen Foster**. Next up, a stellar performance from double bassist **Joe Spinelli** propels the jazz-tinged *Leave Me a Message*, a song that, in its very last line, delivers a cheeky twist in the tale!

A pure folk song, *Just a Woman* simplistically revels in the love between a man and a woman, delighting in the profundity of its human normality: here we are, right now, living *this* life. Obviously an adept creator of love songs, Parker finds the perfect midpoint between innocence and sexiness on the penultimate track, *Sweet Baby* and, thematically linked in terms of what makes the world go round, the jazzy *My Kinda Guy* features a beautiful cameo from the remotely recorded Spanish trumpeter **Josue Garcia**. He also later pops expertly up on *Jack Spratt*, a clever moral tale with inventive, nursery rhyme-style lyrics housing a deeply serious message.

Effortlessly switching styles once more to a swingin’ big band arrangement, Parker turns in a sassy, sultry performance on the flirtatious *Hey Big Boy*. Written by **Ken McNairn**, *Money* presents another blues and a (presumably/hopefully fictitious) money-is-the-root-of-all-evil tale of avarice-driven guilt and regret. **Denis Farley** contributes a tasty saxophone cameo here, then following the whimsical *Peter Peter* Parker turns on the torch-style vocal delivery with aplomb on *Nobody’s Business*, a defiant tale of independence and choosing to keep her personal affairs to herself in this oversharing, social media-obsessed world.

On acoustic guitar, synthesised horns (*Hey Big Boy*) and cajone on two songs, co-producer (with Parker) **Bezooyen** is the chief architect of *Life Gets Better*, while in addition to the aforementioned collaborators, drummer **Jim Powell** appears on all but two tracks. **Linda Bezooyen** and **Brian Hazelbower**, THM artists **Dave Kilbank**, **Pam Edgar** and **Cali Massey** contribute backing vocals to the track that truly epitomizes what this impressive cottage industry of a label is all about. Co-penned by **Lynn Redford**, the hymnal *Gift of Spirit* boasts a tender, slow-burning, country-gospel-flavoured arrangement that lyrically hopes to inspire others to give of themselves for the greater good. The closing track, *King of the Forest*, the sentiment is emphatically lyrically underlined with the theoretical question: if you won the ‘lottery of life,’ so to speak, how would you spend it ?