

# WALTER PARKS

BIOGRAPHY 2010

Over the past three decades, Walter Parks has forged a distinctive international career as the lead guitarist for Woodstock legend Richie Havens, half of the folk-duo The Nudes, and guitarist and leader of the swamp/blues-outfit Swamp Cabbage. With the release of *Walter Parks* on Judy Collins' Wildflower Records in September 2010, he will now make his debut as a solo artist.

Born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida, Parks notes that "classical music was offered in public schools when I was a kid," and his music career began with studying the viola in the sixth through eighth grades. Parks eventually transitioned to the guitar and, in 1973, he formed his first music group. Playing Navy bases, country clubs, cotillions, DeMolay Halls and even Mormon Church dances, the group called itself The Parental Tears Band (an ode to their parents' shared dread that their offspring would pursue music careers).

From 1976–1979, yielding to his parents' advice to have something practical to fall back on, Parks moved to Athens, GA and studied Business Management at the University of Georgia; but, during summers off from school, he played with a jazz trio called Cloudburst, which was influenced by John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra and The Tony Williams Lifetime. Parks withdrew from business school in 1979, one year short of graduation, after becoming frustrated with being trained to make crucial decisions only from a monetary perspective. He returned to his hometown and formed a "fusion" jazz group called Sneakers.

In the early 1980's he opened and ran a clothing store in Neptune Beach, Florida, which required quarterly buying trips to New York. He became magnetized by New York's pace and serious music scene, aspiring to someday live there and showcase his own material. In 1987, he assembled his first original band, an electric rock trio named Dear John, and moved to New York with the group in 1989. In

In 1991, Walter shifted gears a bit, forming an acoustic duo called The Nudes with cellist Stephanie Winters. The Nudes enjoyed a successful career touring U.S. colleges and folk festivals, and recorded three albums (*The Nudes*, *Velvet Sofa* and *Boomerang*).



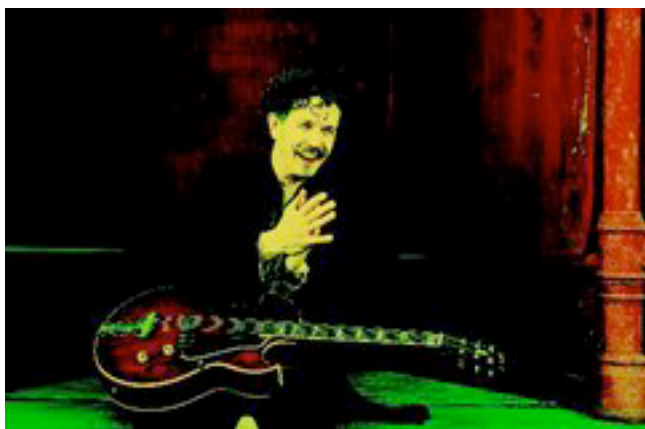
He experimented with various jobs that utilized his business skills, but in doing so, he gained a clear understanding that the traditional office setting was definitely not for him. In 1999, searching for a new perspective, Parks traveled to Plum Village, Tich Nat Han's Buddhist monastery in southwest France. An incessant student of the French language, Walter found the setting perfect on many levels. He reverently refers to the adventure as "the best vacation I've ever taken. I was living amidst unparalleled beauty, in complete tranquility, with plenty of time to listen to my life."

# WALTER PARKS

BIOGRAPHY 2010

Parks moved back to New York in 2000 upon his return from Europe. With a renewed appreciation for his own line of work yet still unready to perform, Walter served briefly as an independent label manager. When asked to join Richie Havens' trio in 2001, Parks felt the time was right to hit the touring trail.

Regarding his work with Havens, Parks says, "Because Richie's robust voice and distinct strumming are so complete, figuring out how to support him with just the right amount of presence was challenging. He wisely allowed me the time and space to approach his music and the solution was discovered organically. People often say we weave together so intricately we sound like one guitar. Lately we've been improvising inside of Richie's classic tunes. Every performance has aspects of a unique jam." Parks feels honored to be a part of Havens' magical presentation. "With every note I play I attempt to live up to the wonderful gift of music he has given the world. I take the obligation very seriously."



While Parks' music projects might seem to be from opposite worlds, they all express elements of his diverse background and balance integral parts of his personality. He explains: "I'm as comfortable with rural culture as I am with so called "high society". I enjoy doing construction, chatting with locals and driving my Ford F-150 through the Georgia back woods but I also frequent New York art museums."

Swamp Cabbage is a rustic outlet for honoring Parks' Southern musical influences and for celebrating his colorful Southern upbringing. Swamp Cabbage borrows from the blues and countrified funk. Parks' new solo project, on the other hand, is lush, beautiful and sophisticated. It explores matters of the soul and spirit and is built upon a foundation of jazz and folk.

A common thread through all of Parks' projects, however is his use of non-traditional guitar chords inspired by the chord voicings of jazz pianists and steel guitar players. Additionally, Walter is partial to vintage instruments and recording gear. "As a college student I had the opportunity to play Duane Allman's sunburst Gibson Les Paul (then in the possession of Dixie Dregs road manager Twiggs Lyndon). I still feel the power and magic of that cherished guitar (now on display in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame).

Parks' dedication to the songs and to the instruments is palpable in every track on *Walter Parks*. In both the recorded and live performances of the new material, he aims "to provide a pleasant experience for listeners and inspire them to create more pleasant moments in their lives."

# # #

[www.walterparks.com](http://www.walterparks.com)

For further information about Walter Parks or interview requests, please contact Margo at 917-586-3957 or [margo@grassyhillentertainment.com](mailto:margo@grassyhillentertainment.com)