Andy Grammer: The Good Parts

Daniel Bromfield   January 3, 2018

Andy Grammer is likable. That's about it. He doesn't have the star-ready personality of someone like Bruno Mars, nor does he have cutting-edge production behind him like Justin Timberlake. But he always has a smile on his face, and he seems like a pretty good guy, at least in a Middle American Christian way. His big single "Honey I'm Good" is about staying true to his lover, and though it was cute and contrived down to the video edited together from happy couples' home footage, it was shameless enough to work.
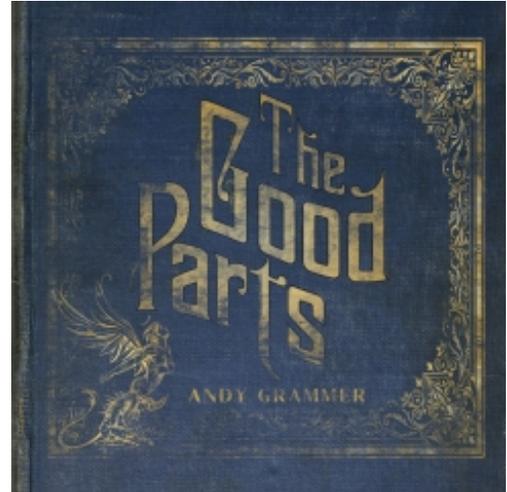
His desire to win everyone over is the animating force of *The Good Parts*, his third album. This is both a weakness and a strength: a weakness because he never takes any real risks and is happy to hop on any trend he can; a strength because even when he indulges in carnage like "Grown Ass Man Child," it's hard to stay mad at him, and he comes out of it like the proverbial puppy dog who tears up the house when you're gone.

He hops on a lot of recognizable pop trends here: the perhaps too-well-named "Smoke Clears" is Chainsmokers pastiche down to the hyper-specific recollections of things that happened in various states, and "Freeze" sounds like Frank Ocean until a deep-house chorus chugs along. But they're oddly diluted. "Smoke Clears" has a drop, but it hits with hardly any physical impact. And a lot of the settings are clearly MIDI presets, especially the organ on "Freeze" (in retrospect, "Honey I'm Good" was a bit chintzy too).

In an era where even the litest of rock singles has the dynamic range of a Michael Bay movie, *The Good Parts* is curiously soft, and its single, "Fresh Eyes," doesn't rely on much more than a hand drum for a beat. I can't think of a pop record more *pianissimo* this year, save perhaps Romeo Santos's *Golden*. This means it's at least listenable. "Grown Ass Man Child" aside, there's nothing here that'd be particularly intrusive in a hair salon.

Which is perhaps the point. If there's anything about *The Good Parts* to be righteously pissed about, it's that its intention seems to be to soundtrack chill playlists. The dominance of the playlist in the pop industry means pop has become less interesting, less risky, less niche, and it's led to the whoa-ohs and nice-guy strumming of 2012's season of indie folk lasting longer than they should. It's hard to think of a more playlist-tailored pop album than this. It certainly works well on that level, but is it really a worthy goal for a pop record to slip by unnoticed?

While it's somewhat better not to notice something than to notice how bad it is, it's rare for a pop song to have a visceral impact the way, say, "Bad Romance" did back in 2009. The most unifying music tends to come from rap, like "Bodak Yellow," but that was more of a sleeper hit than a karate chop. After the chart brilliance we were treated to throughout the 2000s, are we back in the realm of the '70s where the mainstream looks comically bland next to what bubbles beneath? Maybe we need a new punk to shake things up.

- Label:
  S-Curve
- Release Date:
  December 1, 2017