

Wikipedia Canon Assignment:

**The Grassroots Deviation**

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The Grassroots Deviation is an Edmonton-based four-piece musical group that plays a diverse spectrum of roots, rock and funk. The band formed in 2002 and consists of guitarists/vocalists Brian Parker and Dan Smith, bassist/fiddler Mike Barer and drummer Vinay Jhass. The band has played more than 100 shows across Canada on tour and has released two albums "The Grassroots Deviations" their sophomore album "The Circuit".

An article from the Edmonton Journal describes the Grassroots Deviation as "direct and raw" and "more party-driven than most of their folk counterparts". (Edmonton Journal 2007) Their sound is vibrant explosive and energizing which couples nicely with expressive lyrics and smooth rhythm. Front man Brian Parker states, "I think when you combine the writing of folk songs with that dancey, groove-inspired kinda thing, you end up with what we do." In their 6 year career the band has been a mainstay of the live music scene sharing the bill with a diverse list of bands including Keller Williams, That One Guy, Wide Mouth Mason, Wasabi Collective, Slowcoaster, Captain Tractor, Hey Ocean, and Five Alarm Funk. (Myspace).

The Grassroot Deviation is influenced by the likes of Emmylou Harrism, Bruce Cockburn and Neil Young. Their set ranges from full out jam sessions with no vocals such as the Celtic infused song Mr. Somebody to mid tempo folk style ballads like the track Steady Ground. Separating themselves from other bluegrass bands, The Grassroot Deviation is not afraid to turn up the funk with songs like Regular people, the track uses a

12-bar blues and call and response techniques in combination with funk influenced bass and drums.

The Grassroot Deviation fought early criticism at the beginning of their career because the majority of the songs on their self-titled album were lyricless. The band felt that the lack of lyrics did not change or take away from the message of the songs. Brian Parker went on to say “It’s [lyrics] definitely important in some respect. Sometimes lyrics are necessary, sometimes they’re not necessary,” he said. “If you're writing a song and you want to convey a certain emotion or idea...lyrics are one route and music provides another.”(MacEwan Intercamp 2006). Despite the criticism, the band maintains a fairly large following especially among the university crowds in Alberta. An interesting fact is that each member of the band has either graduated or currently attends the university of Alberta. The second album, *The Circuit* is more rooted in their jam session style, which maintains the energy and enthusiasm of their live performances. Parker explains, "We went into the studio and banged it out. It was very speedy, but I'm happy with that sound. That was sort of the concept of the album - 'Let's just do what we do.' We get the most response from our shows. The shows are what we do, so why would we try to change that? (Edmonton Journal, 2007).

Its tough to find the spotlight in the local roots-rock scene during and as a result, during the summer of 2007 The Grassroot Deviation toured across Canada beginning with Victoria, British Columbia and ending in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The band played a number of sold shows further helping the growth of bluegrass in Canada. The Grassroot Deviation has an upcoming show November 7, 2008 at Stars Theatre in Edmonton

## References:

<http://www.myspace.com/theprd>

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