

Parker Brings Enduring Character Back to Silver Screen

Police Gazette's Connection to New Jason Statham, Jennifer Lopez Actioner

When major Hollywood feature *Parker* hits theatres across the country on January 25th, it will mark the return of a character first introduced to the public in 1962 and subsequently played on screen by the likes of Lee Marvin, Robert Duvall, Jim Brown, Peter Coyote, and Mel Gibson. Now Jason Statham gets his shot. Best known for his turns in *Snatch*; *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*; *The Bank Job*; *Crank*; and *The Expendables* series, he's the first Britisher to play the quintessentially American Parker. How will he do? For one thing he plays the character as a Brit, so no unintentionally phony American accents for Statham (Hugh Laurie he is not). He stars with Jennifer Lopez, coming off her stint as an *American Idol* judge. Not known as a top film actress, Lopez has still turned in some good performances in such movies as *Out of Sight*, *An Unfinished Life*, and *U Turn*, and looks to regain a foothold as a bona-fide star. *Parker* also features Michael Chiklis and Nick Nolte, the best veteran actor working today to have never won an Academy Award. At the helm is director Taylor Hackford who was nominated for an Academy Award for piloting *Ray*. And throughout his career Hackford has brought us such films as *The Devil's Advocate*; *Dolores Claiborne*; *An Officer and a Gentleman*; *Blood In, Blood Out*; and *Chuck Berry Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*. So *Parker*, in the words of Madman Mundt, "Could be a pip; could be a pip."

But where does this Parker character come from and why are we making a big deal out of it? Because at the *Police Gazette*, nepotism is not a dirty word. Parker was created

by Donald E. Westlake, the father of the *Police Gazette's* current publisher. Writing under the name Richard Stark, Westlake put out 24 Parker novels from 1962 until his death in 2008. Movies either written by him or based on his stories include the Parker



Donald E. Westlake, aka Richard Stark, created two of the nation's most important things: the Parker character and the *Police Gazette's* current publisher. See more Parker pictures on page 4.

films *Point Blank*, *The Outfit*, and *Payback*, as well as *The Hot Rock*, *The Stepfather*, and *The Grifters*. Sleater-Kinney even saw fit to name one of their albums *The Hot Rock* after the movie starring Robert Redford.

So what is it about the enduring nature of this character? How does he keep coming back into the public consciousness after so many years? One answer may be the way the character was created with the basic quality that he will not go away, in spite of the Herculean efforts of others to make him do so. In an interview with the University of Chicago Press, Westlake said, "I'd done nothing to make him easy for the reader; no small talk, no quirks, no pets. I told myself the only way I could do it is if I held onto the very fact that he was a compendium of what your lead character should not be. I must never soften him, never make him user-friendly, and I've tried to hold to that."

But the story of how he first came up with the notion of the character reveals more. Writers often begin with a feeling or some other abstract characteristic when hit by the inspiration for a story or character. In Westlake's case with Parker, it happened because he'd gotten on the wrong bus. Living in New York City at the beginning of his writing career, Westlake had taken a bus to visit relatives upstate. On the return trip, he thought he'd gotten on the bus that would take him to the Port Authority Terminal in Manhattan. Turns out the bus he was on actually made its final stop in New Jersey near the entrance to the George Washington Bridge. No other buses were going that way, so Westlake decided to walk across the bridge to Manhattan

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Paul Juser and The City from Another Universe



"The Light Gleams an Instant, Then It's Night Once More"

Last January I was living near the top of a hill in the town of Maine, not far from where I grew up. My only neighbors were an elderly couple and a bar featured as a brothel in the movie *Liebestraum*—and conspicuously not listed in the November *National Police Gazette*. I remember 8-foot snow walls on the side of the road when I was a kid. Last year I was able to collect my mail in my underwear every day. I needed to shovel only once, and was wearing a T-shirt by the time I got around to it. Ice caps are melting, water levels are rising, and New York City is crippled for nearly a week by a rain storm. The most unnerving event was the pocket of peace that sheltered Binghamton from Sandy's rage.

We bolstered our walls and dug in, and nothing happened. I drove home from Syra-

cuse that afternoon in rain and wind that bounced my vehicle around the highway like it was weightless. The storm hit north of us, west of us, and it sure as hell hit southeast of us, but Greater Binghamton was unscathed. Next day's work wasn't canceled until 9pm, so I did a beer run and preemptively got enough gas to escape town. The radio reported the rain raged all around me, and to beware fallen trees and telephone poles, but I was barely running my wipers for the light drizzle.

A wise man once told me, "I live on a mountain in Binghamton, why the hell do I care about Global Warming. Screw the penguins." The point is valid, what if Global Warming isn't such a bad thing? Climate Change is our mark of Progress, evidence mankind existed. Archaeologists a billion years in the future will find our layered dust clouds and mark our time-frame. Ten thousand years of history won't mark much, even with that long tail of ape dangling through the fossil record.

Ten thousand years is short, compared to 365 million years of evolution for 540 named dinosaur genera that we regard as dumb beasts. Human beings can only assert themselves as different from other apes for about 7 million years. We all saw *Jurassic Park*, you can't tell me the velociraptor was incapable of establishing a society and discovering architecture. If not a predatory

dinosaur then certainly trachodon could stumble into organized agriculture. We can all agree that no matter how many days before the Universe popped into existence, there has been continuous recorded human history for at least 6,000 years (rounding up). We can't find cities we know were built in that time period. A 65 million-year-old structure would be long ground to dust if constructed of the same rock/mineral-based materials we use today.

I estimate the length of the book between the 12,500 pages proposed by those Edgar Cayce wackos and the 7,000 pages insisted by those Biblical reality wackos. Whatever number you prefer, we've accomplished a hell of a lot in a short amount of time. Or maybe we haven't. The Permian Extinction wiped out 96% of all species on Earth. We don't even know what kind of creatures lived in the Ordovician-Silurian period, but we do know that up to 70% of them died in a very short time. Take note that very short time is still much longer than we've even been monkeys. How sad does the polar bear look now? The planet changes. Things die. Lots and lots of things die, and they do it very quickly and very horribly. Next time you see a mastodon, ask him about it. Even if Global Warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on every single person in every nation of the entire world, does that make it acceptable to dump toxic chemicals wherever you please?