TOM CHAPIN
Let the Bad Times Roll
Sundance

Although the much-loved Grammy-winner Tom Chapin calls this for-adults recording *Let the Bad Times Roll*, and features a cover image of himself playing for spare change on a grimy streetcorner, the album itself is nothing but good times. Tom, after all, co-wrote most of these songs with the songwriting partners he most enjoys, including Si Kahn, funnyman John Forster, and bandmates Michael Mark and Jon Cobert. And, most of the songs are upbeat and life-affirming, which certainly is Tom's style.

Like his late brother Harry, Tom writes story-songs, each one a sharply captured image of a specific event or observation, usually from Tom's own life. "The Day That Max Was Born" is a bouncy, Tin Pan Alley song about the birth of his grandson. In "Once When I Was Young," an atmospheric modal banjo tune, a young romance ends, but the lovers pine for one another for decades. "Boys in the Choir" is taken from Tom's childhood experience being pushed into his church choir. "Upstate New York Waltz" is from the same school as Dave Van Ronk's "Garden State Stomp" or John Forster's saucy "Entering Marion," in that it uses a string of New York town names to tell its story, for example: "On a safari to Canajoharie she was just climbing the walls. We barely were speakin', When we got to Beacon, And broke up in Wappingers Falls." Fun.

The album also includes big ballads, such as the gutsy singalong "A Bridge to Somewhere" and the powerful "Father Daughter Mother Son," a song about parenting that appropriately begins with an a capella harmony section from Tom's daughters Lily and Abigail. The album ends with a sweet version of "The Water Is Wide." Throughout, Tom is backed by his touring band, plus a drummer. Although Tom has become well known for his children's music, *Let the Bad Times Roll* is a fine reminder of the strength of his for-adults songwriting. — SS