

Friday, April 17, 2015, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Arlo Guthrie



Alice's Restaurant: 50th Anniversary Tour

Tonight's program will be announced from the stage.

Cal Performances' 2014–2015 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Q&A WITH ARLO GUTHRIE

What was it like growing up in Coney Island, and how do you think it may have shaped your musical creativity?

I was born under the boardwalk with a guitar in one hand and a harmonica in the other. I rode the Cyclone as I was taking my first breath and swallow'd a Nathan's hot dog and an order of fries before I could crawl. I rode 15 different animals that were stabbed with long poles like a collection of dead insects while learning the *oom-pah* tunes glaring from the horns before the circling crowds of parents waiting for their kids to fall. I gazed at the bearded ladies, the muscle men, women, and all kinds of unusual entertainers scattered between the rows and rows of hawkers and barkers all yellin' to crowds of wandering visitors from the normal world. I was at home in Coney Island.

You grew up amid folk royalty, of course, but what pop or rock artists influenced you? What did you listen to on the radio as a teenager?

We were pretty poor for being so royal. But so was everybody else. It didn't seem like we lacked for anything. Everybody had some kind of a job they were doing, even if it was just guarding the street corner looking out for each other. We knew everyone by name and my world did not expand outward from there until over a decade later, when I began to live beyond my own neighborhood. Hank Williams, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, and Elvis were always on the radio. But my favorite singers were the Everly Brothers.

You were thrust into the music scene. Was there ever anything you wanted to do other than music and do you think that would have even been possible?

I wanted to be a forest ranger when I was in high school, so I went to college for that. Rocky Mountain College was (and still is) in

Billings, Montana, and I got a great start being there. Unfortunately, when I left for Thanksgiving vacation in 1965, things happened that changed everything.

If you had to fight, fight...?

On the right side.

The secret to life is?

Knowing which is the right side.

The popularity of folk music seems to ebb and flow but the genre has staying power. Why do you think that is?

Folk music is not a genre. It's the way everyone learns to play almost anything that's not classical music. Folk music is not a bunch of latte drinkers sitting around singing in the key of me. Every garage band, punk, rap, rage, mellow, hip-hop, country, blues, rock, and jazz musician learns in the folk tradition: the school of learning by ear from other people, recordings, or trial and error. It's another way music is handed down from generation to generation. Oh geez, I just spilled my latte on these notes....

When you started writing "Alice's Restaurant," you had no idea...?

When it would end!

What is it that you still love about performing?

Music is good for the soul whether you're playing it or just listening. That's what I love. I also love going from place to place and seeing old friends and making new ones.

Why do you think "Alice's Restaurant" has been such a cultural phenomenon?

Well, I've always loved good stories. And I've loved telling tall tales. Why people enjoy it is beyond me. I haven't sung "Alice" for years,

and people still keep coming to the gigs. “Alice” has taken on a life of its own and become attached to the Thanksgiving holiday—but why remains a mystery.

Cats or dogs?

Dogs for friends, cats for mice!

This tour could be seen as an anniversary tour for “Alice’s Restaurant,” and with Thanksgiving fast approaching readers will want to know what happened to Old Trinity Church, which served as the backdrop for your song and the movie?

Funny you should mention it, as there will be a 50th anniversary tour of “Alice,” beginning in January 2015 and running for over a year. With that said, the Old Trinity Church is still around. We bought it over 20 years ago and have renamed it The Guthrie Center at the Old Trinity Church. It’s a long name so we just refer to it as “the Church.” We run our foundation (not-for-profit) work from the old building, and hopefully it continues to be of service to the local community.

No matter how long you stay on the road, what makes it all right?

[Deleted by daughter No. 2.]

Looking back at your incredible career, what memory stands out the most?

There are hundreds of little memories from the almost 50 years I’ve been a performer, but the Woodstock Festival remains a highlight for obvious reasons.

What is the best piece of advice that you ever received from your dad?

I boiled it down to this: “It is better to fail at being yourself than to succeed at being somebody else.”

Fifty years from now when people look through the annals of music history, how would you like to be remembered?

I’ll let you know when I’ve been forgotten.



ARLO GUTHRIE has been known to generations as a prolific songwriter, social commentator, master storyteller, actor, and activist. Born in Coney Island, New York, in 1947, Mr. Guthrie is the eldest son of Marjorie Mazia Guthrie, a professional dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and founder of the Committee to Combat Huntington's Disease, and America's most beloved singer, writer, philosopher, and artist, Woody Guthrie. Mr. Guthrie has become an iconic figure in folk music in his own right with a distinguished and varied career spanning over 50 years.

Growing up Guthrie, Mr. Guthrie was surrounded by such renowned artists as Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and Ramblin' Jack Elliott, to name only a few. Not surprisingly, Mr. Guthrie drew from these influences and he in turn became a delineative figure bridging generations of folk. He and Pete Seeger created a legendary collaboration that was sustained for over 40 years. The last "Pete & Arlo" show was in November 30, 2013, at Carnegie Hall, only a few months before Mr. Seeger passed away at age 94.

In 1965, a teenage Mr. Guthrie performed a "friendly gesture" that proved to be fateful. Mr. Guthrie was arrested for littering, leading him to be deemed "not moral enough to join the army." Mr. Guthrie attained international attention at age 19 by recounting the true events on the album *Alice's Restaurant* in 1967. The "Alice's Restaurant Massacree," an 18-minute-and-20-second partially sung comic monologue opposing the war and the backward reasoning of authority, has become an antiestablishment anthem and an essential part of Thanksgiving on rock stations receiving worldwide airplay. *Alice's Restaurant* achieved platinum status and was made into a movie in 1969, in which Mr. Guthrie played himself, by the esteemed director Arthur Penn. That same year also brought Mr. Guthrie to the rock festival of the ages, Woodstock. His appearance showcased Mr. Guthrie's chart-topping "Coming into Los Angeles," which was included on the multi-platinum *Woodstock* soundtrack and movie.

Beginning the 1970s with a number of albums for Warner Brothers, Mr. Guthrie helped set the standard for the singer-songwriter genre burgeoning at the time. Perhaps the best known is *Hobo's Lullaby* (1972), which featured a diverse body of work. Most notable is the definitive version of Steve Goodman's "The City of New Orleans" that was a hit on all major charts. Another critically acclaimed album that charted on *Billboard* was *Amigo* (1976), which includes "Massachusetts," honored in 1981 as the official State Folk Song.

Taking complete creative control, Mr. Guthrie left the major record label system in 1983 to fulfill his career as a truly independent artist, and established Rising Son Records, one of the first indie labels in existence. Rising Son is still in active operation serving as his record and production company. To date, Rising Son Records has released over 20 titles of Mr. Guthrie's, both all new material and re-mastered versions of his classic records, including the Grammy Award-nominated *Woody's 20 Grow Big Songs* (1991),

featuring Mr. Guthrie and his family, and *In Times Like These* (2007), recorded with the University of Kentucky Symphony Orchestra. The latest offering is *Here Come the Kids* (2014), recorded at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago, Illinois, from the previous tour of the same name, celebrating the centennial of his father, Woody Guthrie.

In addition to his musical career, Mr. Guthrie is an accomplished actor with numerous television appearances. Mr. Guthrie has had recurring roles in two major network television series (*The Byrds of Paradise* and *Relativity*), and feature films, the aforementioned *Alice's Restaurant* and *Roadside Prophets* (1992). Mr. Guthrie is the author of three children's books and a distinguished photographer, showing his works in selected galleries.

Inspired by his parents' activism, Mr. Guthrie bought the old Trinity Church ("the Church") that is now home to the Guthrie Center and the Guthrie Foundation.

Named for his parents, the Guthrie Center is a not-for-profit interfaith church foundation dedicated to providing a wide range of local and international services. The Guthrie Foundation is a separate not-for-profit educational organization that addresses issues such as the environment, health care, cultural preservation, and educational exchange. In 2009, Mr. Guthrie was awarded the ASCAP Foundation Champion award for making a difference through social action on behalf of worthwhile causes and demonstrating exceptional efforts in humanitarianism.

Mr. Guthrie's trademark ability to derail a song with a comical tangent and bring it right back on track with a relatable thought is as concise as ever. Fifty years after the historic events that launched him to reluctant celebrity, Mr. Guthrie brings the "Alice's Restaurant Massacre" in its entirety back to the stage for an international tour beginning in January 2015.