

MAY WE ALL BE, FOREVER YOUNG ...

SONGS PERFORMED AT JOAN BAEZ CONCERT 'TOOK ME BACK TO 1969, WHEN TIMES WERE MUCH SIMPLER,' WRITES BROWN



TED BROWN
Column

The Sidekick and I recently made the trek to Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, and ended up visiting my past.

I didn't plan it that way. I saw an advertisement for Joan Baez in concert, and in a spur of the moment, I bought a pair of tickets - the last two available for the show. They were single tickets, so The Sidekick sat behind me, instead of beside me.

Being quite friendly she developed a "brand new best friend" on either side of her before the concert even started.

I had similar luck, striking up a conversation with a couple from Saskatchewan in town to see the sights and attend the Joan Baez concert.

We traded stories about various concerts. I almost

forgot The Sidekick was in the seat behind me, but she was doing the same from her seat.

Finally, the lights dimmed, the applause swelled, and Baez walked out on stage.

She opened with Don't think twice it's alright, one of the many Bob Dylan songs she has made famous over the years, and I leaned back in my seat to soak up the magic.

Her voice is still the same old Joan: Strong, controlled and able to hit those high notes flawlessly. At 77 years of age, she is truly amazing.

She performed old favourites, like There But For Fortune, A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, and Me and Bobby McGee in a duet with backup singer Grace Stumberg. It was great, as Joan sang the traditional version and Grace wrapped up with Janis Joplin's rendition.

Every song evoked memories of years gone by and, when she played the intro for Diamonds and Rust, a shiver rang up my spine. It took me back to 1969, when times were much simpler.

My sister Mary Lou and I were in a folk group with friends Gord McDonald and Vern Denny. And like all folkies of that time, we worshipped the various folk artists, many of them covering Bob Dylan's music. Baez was no exception.

Most folkies agreed she made Dylan's music come alive. She could sing - Dylan, not so much.

A dedicated pacifist, Joan used her voice and music to protest her country's involvement in Vietnam and Cambodia, the draft, racial discrimination, and countless social issues. She even did a stint in jail.

For that small group of four teens growing up in Limehouse and Acton who loved her music, we were pretty tame. We were in a time when there was no such thing as terrorism in our country. We were safe and comfortable. No one was rich, but we were all content.

And as the concert progressed, it was apparent Joan is still a pacifist, championing her cause.

She has no love for US President Donald Trump, and she said "It's so comforting to visit Canada, and still be able to find those little pockets of sanity here, something we no longer have at home (in the US)."

I pondered those days when the four of us were together, playing music in a young, simple life.

Gord moved away years ago, and plays in a country band. Vern passed away a few years ago, and Mary Lou and I don't play together much anymore. The times certainly have "a-changed."

Joan was approaching the end of her concert, I recognized the intro of another Dylan song that made tears well up in my eyes. It's entitled Forever Young.

As her great soprano voice swelled up in the chorus, my heart swelled in my chest and those lyrics went so deep. It seemed so appropriate.

May you grow up to be righteous

May you grow up to be true

May you always know the truth

And see the lights surrounding you

May you always be courageous

Stand upright and be strong

And may you stay Forever young.

Ted Brown is a freelance columnist for the IFP. He can be reached at ted-bit@hotmail.com.

THEN AND NOW



Heritage Halton Hills photo



Alison Walker photo

The Royal Canadian Legion building was built around 1880 to house H.A. McCallum's livery stables. In 1909, the stables were bought by John Willoughby. At that time they were renovated by J.B. Mackenzie and Co. The building was later renovated again when it was bought by the Royal Canadian Legion to become the headquarters of Branch 120. The building is commonly known as Legion Hall. Presently part of the building on the main floor houses C&S Printing.

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