

In Tom Rush's career, folk is still his forte

By **Mary Campbell**

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tom Rush is taking a seat in a Columbia Records conference room to do an interview when his cell phone rings.

"I tell people I carry this in case there's a folk music emergency," he says jokingly. Actually, Rush does voice-overs, and the call is about a job.

"The microphone is in my spare room in Moose, Wyoming," Rush tells the interviewer. "And the tape recorder is in Hong Kong."

But back to folk music.

"Folk music is doing well," Rush said. "I think it is achieving a steady presence in the culture like jazz and classical. It is not just a branch of pop music."

"I think a lot of artists, if you scratch a little below the surface, are folk singers. Bruce Springsteen made some very folk records. Nobody ever called them that. Also, Paul Simon. And Jewel — I can't perceive the difference between her and a folk singer."

His new CD, "The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets," has 17 songs, ranging from "San Francisco Bay Blues," first recorded live at a Boston coffeehouse in 1962, through folk rock to 1999's "River Song."

"For the anthology, I had to listen to everything I ever recorded. It took a

while. I tend to be pretty critical of my own stuff. I like the stuff that made it on to the CD," he said. "A few other

cuts just gave me the creeps. What was I thinking?"

Rush learned "San Francisco Bay Blues" when he was studying English literature at Harvard University. Composer Jesse Fuller taught him the song when he was a guest on Rush's 30-minute radio program.

"You had to learn 'San Francisco Bay Blues' if you were going to be a folk singer," said Rush, adding: "I think I do it better today."

He interrupted his studies for a year to see if he could make a living as a folk singer. He decided that he could — just barely. He had planned to study marine biology at the University of North Carolina, but his father was strong for Harvard. "In retrospect, it was a good place to be," he said. "It was a hotbed of folkiness."

When the 1960s folk boom went bust, Rush retired to a farm in his native New Hampshire. "That lasted nine months. I love to perform. I don't love to travel, but the performing part I still find great joy in. I went back to playing on an occasional basis. I did not go back to touring 12 months a year."

Today, he does about 50 shows a year; more this year because of the new CD. He performs alone or with Joe Menonna, who sings harmony and plays piano, synthesizer and saxophone.

Rush played three reunion concerts at Boston's Symphony Hall in, 1980

with area folk singers. "Most of them were amateurs, singing for the love of the music. They didn't have an idea of making money at it. A lot of these people hadn't been onstage in 20 years. We had some very nervous people."

Out of these concerts grew Rush's occasional Club 47 shows, named for a Cambridge, Mass., folk club. These shows are a mixture of newcomers, such as Vance Gilbert, and stars, including Janis Ian and Richie Havens. "Keep your eyes on Vance. He is great," Rush said.

His favorite songs include Joni Mitchell's "The Circle Game" and "Urge for Going," and his own "No Regrets," which is popular with other singers; there's even a rap version.

Rush lives in Wyoming with his wife, Rena, who has worked to bring wolves back to Yellowstone Park. "She had to be out there. I had to be with her. It seems like an odd place for me to end up. I'm a New England boy, through and through."

Bison camp on the lawn where Rush and his wife live. They love the house, but have to move because Yellowstone Park owns it. So they are looking for "a nice, inexpensive house by the water" in Jackson, Wyo.

"River Song," one of the songs on the new CD, is about the Snake River, which runs through the Tetons. "I love the track, and I don't love much," he said.



AP photo

Tom Rush plays his guitar in New York's Central Park in October. His new CD, "The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets," has 17 songs, from 1962's "San Francisco Bay Blues" to 1999's "River Song."

The Boston Globe

ARTS & FILMS

Holiday Rush at Symphony Hall

CLUB 47 CONTINUES - Tom Rush's annual holiday celebration, featuring Tom and Beverly Rush, Bonnie Raitt, Maria Muldaur, Fritz Richmond and the Jug Band, David Buskin and Robin Batteau, Bill Morrissey, Christine Lavin and guests. At Symphony Hall through Sunday night, including a children's matinee Sunday.

By Susan Wilson
Special to the Globe

In the last decade, Boston fans have been graced with two heartwarming public rituals to

MUSIC REVIEW

add to their private festivities of ringing out the old and ringing in the new. One, of course, is the daylong, citywide celebration of First Night Dec. 31. The other, one could easily argue, is folk veteran and entrepreneur Tom Rush's annual Symphony Hall extravaganza, which has grown into a popular three-night musical event with a special kids' concert added Sunday afternoon. Tickets are still available for all remaining shows this weekend.

This year's installment of "holiday Rush" - dubbed "Club 47 Continues," as a tribute to Harvard Square's famed folk mecca of the '60s - began last night with a packed hall and a sturdy lineup of acoustic-music talent. As was the tradition at the old Club 47 - and as has already become tradition in Rush's ambitious shows - legendary folk figures were mixed with newer, less familiar faces in the acoustic music revival.



Bonnie Raitt, Tom Rush at Symphony Hall last night.

GLOBE STAFF PHOTOS BY KEITH JENKINS

The considerable talents of Rush, Maria Muldaur and the inimitable Bonnie Raitt buoyed the evening's second segment into the jubilant holiday event for which Rush is known.

"Newcomers" Christine Lavin and Bill Morrissey were given the task of warming up the capacity crowd. Both put in stellar sets, mixing lyrical original tunes with offbeat humor and endearing insights.

Rush entered after intermission, ever engaging with his smooth-as-silk renderings of new and old standards. A pert and finely tuned Muldaur followed, bringing out the best of Richmond's Jug Band. Still, the showstopper was the New Wave-attired and wonderfully wired Raitt, who brandished her electric and acoustic guitars, ripping through ballads and blues alike with the ease of the superstar Boston has always known her to be.

Like folk, Tom Rush rises again

By Scott Alarik
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Tom Rush's name is rarely trumpeted among the folk music giants of the last half-century. Yet it can be argued that the New Hampshire native has been the most consistently influential singer-songwriter to emerge from the '60s folk revival.

Again and again, the folk singer, bluesman, and songwriter reinvented his career, always ahead of the commercial curve. He played a seminal role in the urban blues revival of the early '60s and the folk-rock boom of the mid-'60s. Rolling Stone credited his 1968 Elektra album, "The Circle Game," which introduced the songs of Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, and Jackson Browne, with ushering in the era of the singer-songwriter.

Columbia-Legacy has released a brilliant retrospective of Rush's 37-year career called "No Regrets: The Very Best of Tom Rush." More impressive even than the number of influential songs it includes is the splendid consistency of his style. In celebration of the album's release, Rush will perform tonight at Harvard's Sanders Theatre in Cambridge.

As he roamed from form to form, Rush never let the trappings of the day submerge his own sound. His se-

ductively honest baritone remained the same whether he was wailing old blues tunes, barking out folk-rock, laying the groundwork for the '70s country-rock craze ("Ladies Love Outlaws" was written for him, not Waylon Jennings), delivering starkly commanding covers of Mitchell's "Urge for Goin'" and Browne's "Jamaica, Say You Will," or his own lonely classic, "No Regrets."

"My approach is always to feel like I'm the servant of the song," Rush said. "Some singers, I feel, put the song on like a suit of clothes, and for me, it's more the other way around. You just want to be the window people see the song through."

He cut his teeth in the very traditional Cambridge folk scene that revolved around the fabled Club 47 in the early '60s. His early records were mostly lean folk blues sprinkled with a droll, winking wit that suggested he took the songs very seriously, himself not at all.

"I was always exquisitely aware of the irony of Harvard undergraduates singing about how hard it is picking cotton and working in the mines," he said. "But I think we were all very sincerely enraptured by these songs, because they were so real and gritty and honest. It was not our experiences, though, so something closer to our own lives had a lot of resonance."

That resonance was coming from new folk writers like Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs. While Rush was becoming a star with his blues and original songs written in traditional styles, his attempts at more contemporary ballads were not encouraged: His first Club 47 performance of "No Regrets" was so badly received that for several years he shelved the song that would become his greatest hit. In 1967, Rush moved to New York, where his songwriting was nurtured in ways it was not in Cambridge. As he heard new songwriters Mitchell, Browne, and Taylor, he felt he had struck a mother lode.

"I think the songwriter stuff was a lot more accessible to John Q. Public than the coal-miner ballads," he said. "So all of a sudden, there was the potential of selling albums beyond a small coterie of devoted students of traditional music."

"The Circle Game" established him in the vanguard of the songwriter

movement, both as writer and interpreter. For years, his career flourished. But in 1975, Columbia, his label since 1970, declined to re-new his contract.

He said, "My records were making money for the label, but it's a trendy industry, and they moved on to other things. They somehow decided the record-buying public was between 18 and 25, so they let the baby boom outgrow them. They didn't try to keep up as their tastes evolved; they just let them walk away."

Rush retired to his New Hampshire farm, then decided to fight back. He began promoting his own shows.

"The concert industry, recording industry, radio industry all agreed that folk had no commercial viability," he said. "I guess I just got curious about where the audience had gone. It seemed that just 10 minutes ago, there was a huge audience. They couldn't all have died; it would have been in the papers."

Rush became convinced his audience was still around, just not among the rock-club set. The crowd for his annual Christmas show at the Paradise was declining, so he moved it to Symphony Hall. In 1980, he sold fewer than 500 seats at the Paradise. In 1981, he filled 2,500-seat Symphony Hall — at twice the ticket price.

News of his commercial triumph spread through the moribund folk world, inspiring promoters to try larger concerts at more comfortable venues. The folk revival of the '80s was underway.

Typically, Rush used his annual Symphony Hall shows to introduce new folk stars like Nanci Griffith, Shawn Colvin, and Bill Morrissey, playing as crucial a role in launching the '80s songwriter revival as he had 20 years earlier. He has been — a constant demand as a performer ever since.

Asked about his legendary artistic generosity, he shrugged off the praise, making it all sound as sensible as a farmer planting in spring if he thinks he might be hungry in winter.

"You know, an artist needs a context to exist in," he said. "It worked for microbreweries; the more there was a microbrewery scene, the better they all did. It's the same with music. I've always tried to create an environment that I could be a part of, rather than just existing in my own isolation."

Bucks County Courier Times

Levittown, Pennsylvania
December 5, 1999

After more than 30 years, it's still a Rush

By ED CONDRAN

COURIER TIMES

news@caikinsnewspapers.com

Tom Rush is in a very good mood these days. "I've had such a great year," Rush said while calling from his Moose, Wyoming, home. "It's been a very busy year. It's been a very rewarding year. I've been writing some songs and doing a lot of touring. I've been having fun going out by myself and doing the Club 47 tour."

The Club 47 tour featured Rush and a number of his folk peers such as Richie Havens, Janis Ian and Vance Gilbert on stage together. "That was a tremendous success and a great time," Rush said. "It's great to get up there with such talented individuals every night. That's part of what made this year so great for me, but I've also had a great deal of fun going out and playing by myself. That's been very rewarding as well."

That's what Rush will be doing when he makes his debut

tonight at the Painted Bride. "I've heard so many great things about that place," Rush said. "I can't wait to play it. It's going to be a great deal of fun playing there. I love Philadelphia and my fans that come out to see me there. The people there have always been so supportive."

Expect Rush to play tracks from his entire canon, which spans more than 30 years, Columbia/Legacy Records recently released "The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets," a career spanning retrospective. The soft-spoken songsmith is anxious to perform much of the tracks from the disc. "I'm going to do as much as I can," Rush said. "I'm going to have fun. I'm going to mix it up. You'll hear me do Bo Diddley next to Joni Mitchell."

If Rush is doing Mitchell material, that means he will be playing songs from his

groundbreaking album, 1968's "The Circle Game." Most of the record comprised tracks penned by a troika of then unknown songwriters — the aforementioned Mitchell, James Taylor and Jackson Browne. "I was desperate for songs at the time and I couldn't find them in the usual places," Rush said. "Then I found the three Js and they gave me an album on a silver platter. At this time of year I'll do 'Urge for Going,' and maybe I'll do 'No Regrets,' which is a song I wrote. I love doing songs from that album but I'm also looking forward to working out the new songs."

"It would be great to have the opportunity to put something new out," Rush said. "It'll happen sooner than later. You can bet on that. But right now I'm focusing on this tour. I have plenty of time to concentrate on the next album. Right now I just want to live for today."

THE Chautauquan DAILY



Chautauqua, New York

Music review

by Maritza Morgan

While reminiscing about the music of the '60's in a rambling pre-ambule to what was to follow, Tom Rush said "...we were cleanly scrubbed college kids singing about working in the coal mines." And, that is what the Friday night, large Amphitheater audience seemed to consist of, the "Baby-boom" of the '40's, singing protest songs in the '60's, and now polished in a scrubbed middle-age with children of their own.

Rush put on a very, very good show. He, for a change gave the audience credit for intelligence, his songs and jokes rather up-lifting to the spirit, his one-liners cogent and funny.

He also had a wonderful almost symphonic format for his show. He began with only one guitarist, a four-star, most excellent musician and as the program progressed, another musician would come out of the shadow of the stage so that at the halfway mark, the band was in full attendance as was the content and sound of the songs.

In his songs, this gentle comedian tamed the rock and roll memory and blended it into ballads. He opened with "Jazz Man," "Johah," and "Drop Down, Mama," the refrain running "...some woman might treat me wrong."

He lives in New Hampshire. "A bizarre place, weird people, nine months of winter and three of rough sledding."

By the time the band hit "Merrimack County" it was in full force on the stage and quite magnificent, especially in "Gold On The River." In this piece, the drummer and the sax player "did their thing" with technical wizardry and light humor. A gentle take-off on Tex Ritter had Rush in the role of a Ranchero who "...when he shoots, he shoots to kill. . . . I am the Bandit of Brazil!"

Then came a take-off on the Space Psyche of the present day. "Beam Me Up, Scotty" became a space-type spiritual. The closing selection, "Wasn't That A Mighty Storm . . . blew all the people away" as the audience joined in the refrain. The encore was "On The Road Again."



Tom Rush

photo by Rogers

THE PLAIN DEALER

Veteran folkie mesmerizes crowd

By MICHAEL SANGIACOMO

PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

There is something strange about Tom Rush.

How could this guy have been performing for more than 35 years and still look 35 years old? Did he release his first album in 1962 just after birth? Does he have some kind of Dorian Gray painting that ages instead of him?

There he was standing on the stage of the Happy Days Visitor Center in Cuyahoga Valley National Park Wednesday night looking and sounding the same as he did 20 years ago.

His audience sure didn't splash around in his fountain of youth. They were on average the high end of thirtysomething. Rush still looks like Tom Selleck and sounds as good as ever. He could at least have the consideration to grow some gray hair like the rest of us.

If he wasn't so darn entertaining, I could really hate this guy.

But his show was an acoustic masterpiece. It was a night of perfect songs and stories, just the right number of winks, grins and self-deprecating wit. It is rare to see a performer who has such total control of an audience. While he was singing, there was not a word or a sound.

Early in the show he sang "Circle Game," Joni Mitchell's poignant song about growing up and growing old, a song that got many baby boomers through puberty back in 1968 when Rush recorded

MUSIC REVIEW

Tom Rush

it. His version helped make the hitherto unknown blond Canadian a star. It was odd to watch the audience nod reverentially, even mouth the words, but no one sang along. It was as if they feared their voice might shatter the fragile mood.

Rush gave a long performance, separated by a short break, with old songs and a few new ones worthy of a place in his repertoire. He played a flawless version of "No Regrets" followed by the haunting instrumental, "Rockport Sunday" that triggered a few lumps in the throat. That was nothing compared to his rendition of "Child's Song," his 1968 story of a young man moving out on his own. That brought tears. Rush said now that he is the father of a young man, he identifies with the parents in the song, and it still holds up.

It was worth the price of admission to hear the story of the song "Wasn't That A Mighty Storm?" which told the tale of a flood that killed 12,000 people in Galveston, Texas, in 1900. He said the song was discovered and resurrected by fellow folkie Eric Von Schmidt and that the original song was recorded in 1942 in prison by a man named the Rev. Sinkiller Griffith. Now that's a name that would look great on a marquee.

Entertainment News & Views

South Florida
November 26, 1999

by Lee Zimmerman
Music Critic

Tom Rush, *The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets*



Tom Rush
Has never
gotten the
acclaim of say,
Bob Dylan,
Joni Mitchell,

or the other artists of his generation. Perhaps it was because he came out of Boston, and not Greenwich Village, as did most of his peers. Maybe it was because he didn't write the majority of his own material and, as a result, didn't have the legacy of song to pass on to those who followed in his wake. All are logical and plausible explanations; however, they don't erase the injustice that's come with this lack of recognition.

Now, thanks to *No Regrets*, a superb retrospective that spans his career from his earliest days to the present, Rush may finally get that second look that's every bit his due. Beginning with a 1962 offering from his *Tom Rush at the Unicorn* album, the 17-track anthology traces his origins as a budding folk blues troubadour occupying much the same territory as the young Bob Dylan through his fleeting forays into rock 'n' roll and his eventual emergence as an influential, interpretive singer. Ironically, while Rush was among the first artists to cover the early songs of such fledgling singer songwriters as Joni Mitchell and Jackson Browne, his few original works are equally transcendent. If he had never written another song, he'd have secured his immortality through the title track alone, a definitive narrative about loss

and lament that's among the most haunting and heart-wrenching songs ever written.

There are plenty of other songs that make this an essential collection: his impassioned performance on "Lost My Drivin' Wheel," the wistful high country sound of "Merrimac County" and a new masterpiece called "River Song" that effectively recaptures that graceful majesty of old. These are songs sung from the heart, songs that speak to the soul. No regrets, indeed.

HARVARD MAGAZINE

AMAZING GRACE



Entertainment is plentiful throughout the celebration (and rarely free). Above: "An Evening with Tom Rush at Club 47" evokes a popular Cambridge coffee house of the Sixties and packs Tercentenary Theatre.

Some members of *Harvard Magazine's* staff remember going, as much younger editors, in the early Sixties, to Club 47 on Mount Auburn Street, there to hear Joan Baez, even younger, sing "Amazing Grace." They went with delight to Tercentenary Theatre on Friday night to hear Baez, and Tom Rush, and Bonnie Raitt, and Livingston

If the Prince of Wales glamorized Harvard's 350th birthday celebration, and the Secretary of State politicized it, the concert in the Yard on Friday night humanized it.

Taylor, and other folksingers attempt to recreate some of the feeling of those early days in the folk revival.

"Welcome to Club 47," said Rush. "As you can see, the place hasn't changed much from the Sixties. We've added a few more seats and the roof leaks a little."

In the finale, the musicians joined to belt out "Wasn't That a Mighty Storm." The audience rose to its feet in assent. For an encore, Joan Baez led the congregation, still standing, in the singing of "Amazing Grace." There wasn't a dry eye in the house. If there was a dry eye in the house, it should be taken to a doctor straightaway.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

November 22, 1999

Folk Icon Rush Also Loves a Joke, Rock and Blues

Pop Music Review

The voice has grown deeper. He's abandoned New England Bohemia for the wilds of remote Wyoming. But singer-songwriter Tom Rush remains much as he was in the folkie '60s when he was an influential champion and interpreter of the work of such contemporaries as Joni Mitchell and Jackson Browne.

Dressed in worn jeans and with his 'shin sleeves rolled up, Rush was a relaxed and friendly host Saturday at McCabe's Guitar Shop, frequently causing pianist Joe Mennonna to giggle behind the keyboard. The jokes between songs were relentless, often poking fun at Rush's new life in the town of Moose.

"If we're not supposed to eat animals," he said, quoting a neighborhood bumper sticker, "how come they're made of meat?"

Comedy aside, Rush serenaded his audience with a well-paced set, dabbling in rock 'n' roll and including a country rendition of "Drop Down Mama" by the late Tennessee blues man Sleepy John Estes.

"The River Song" was a poignant new tune recorded for his retrospective album, "The Very Best of Tom Rush." But his performance of "No Regrets," his best-known song, included a new instrumental passage that suggested Rush still isn't finished with the old songs.

—STEVE
APPLEFORD

Capacity crowd at Market Mills

Singer Tom Rush finds his niche

By KENNETH CHUTCHIAN
Sun Staff

LOWELL—Ranging in age from area grade-schoolers to elderly tenants, an enthusiastic audience numbering over 4000 gathered to hear folk singer Tom Rush perform a free concert at the Market Mills courtyard last night.

Rush played 19 songs for the overflow crowd, performing like a man who has discovered his niche. He does not specialize in any music genre, nor does he tailor his music for one particular audience.

As a Harvard graduate in 1964, he was introduced at the Market Mills stage as a man who could have chosen any one of a number of careers.

"I like that," he said before his first song. "Could have gone on to many careers . . . but didn't."

Some of his songs were irreverent, such as "Ladies Love Outlaws," Buddy Holly's "Love's Made a Fool Out of Me," and "Kind Kind Loving."

Others were done in earnest, like "Jazzman," "Jonah," "Late Nite Radio," "Louisiana Eyes," and "Rockport Sunday."

His best moment came during "Wasn't That a Mighty Storm," a song about a flood in Galveston, Texas, in the year 1900. It is a song that can only be done live by a true performer.

The blues

Rush has a soft spot for the blues and he sings them well. "Drop Down Mama," one of his best songs of the night, is about a womanizer whose mate is telling him to shape up. Rush sings the song with the proper gleam in his eye, one of a man who enjoys being a boy.

The fifth song, "Merrimack County," is a whistful song about life in the Concord, N.H. region. His fans wait for this tune, and Rush doesn't disappoint them, delivering it with a touch of reverence.

Rush can spin a tale like an old country geezer under any condition—in his songs, in between songs or in the company of well-wishers he has just met.

His use of imagery is economical but on the mark. He said he learned "Drop Down Mama" from a man named Sleepy John Estes, who, according to Rush, "was a great singer who couldn't stay awake very long . . . you'd be talking to him and he'd fall asleep every two or three minutes. All of his songs are real short."

Rush dropped out of the music industry 12 years ago, during a time when a good many activists and artists who were caught up in the social changes of the 1960's took time out from their pastimes to reflect on their lives.

"I had it up to here with the music business," Rush said in an interview after the concert. "I fired my manager, my friends, everybody. I was sick of it."

The folk singer paused a few seconds for the right effect. "That lasted about nine months," he said like a man who knows when he's hooked.

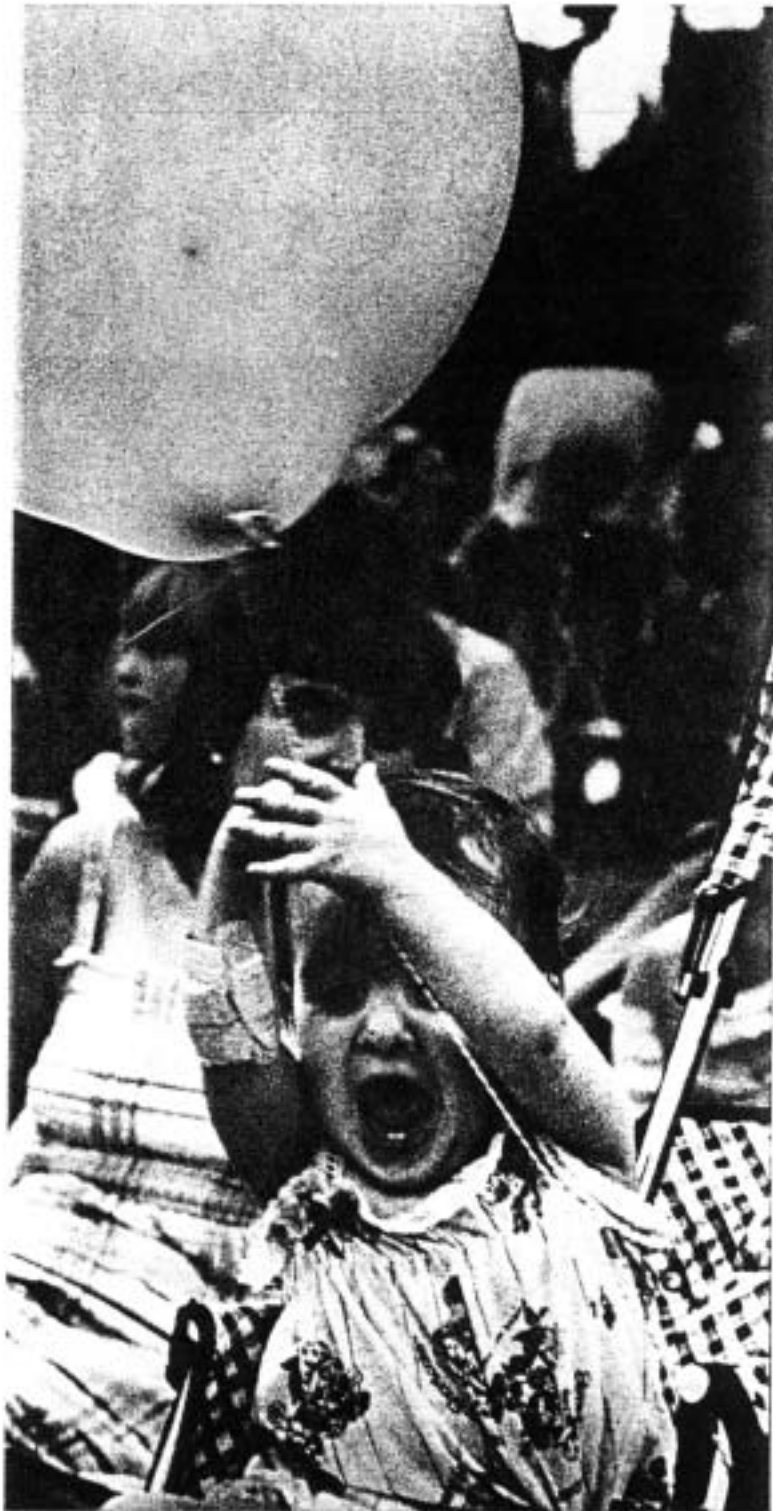
His performing now consists of about 40 dates per year, as opposed to the 300 days spent on the road during the late 1960's and early 1970's.

Asked about his farm, he replied, "Well, it's really a sink hole. One day it will be working farm."

In response to a suggestion that he may have lost some of his 1960's idealism, he laughs.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Rush said jokingly. "You have insulted me."

"I'm a musician," he said seriously. "It's difficult to be a musician in this day and age. Business is strictly a means of survival."



Up-tempo

Singer/songwriter Tom Rush says his audience has diversified over the years, and his claim is supported by one of his biggest supporters, 17-month-old Amanda Paquette of Lowell. Amanda, shown here enjoying the Rush concert at Market Mills summer stage last night, prefers the up-beat pieces. (Sun photo by Richard Hunt)

THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL

Founded in 1882

critique

By Kevin Lynch
of The Journal Staff

Folk singer Tom Rush emerged from the hills of New Hampshire to reclaim his rightful audience Friday night at the Rainbow Summer concert in Uihlein Hall of the Performing Arts Center.

The music, like the man, was often dreamy, but with a rough grace and a sense of balance and well-being.

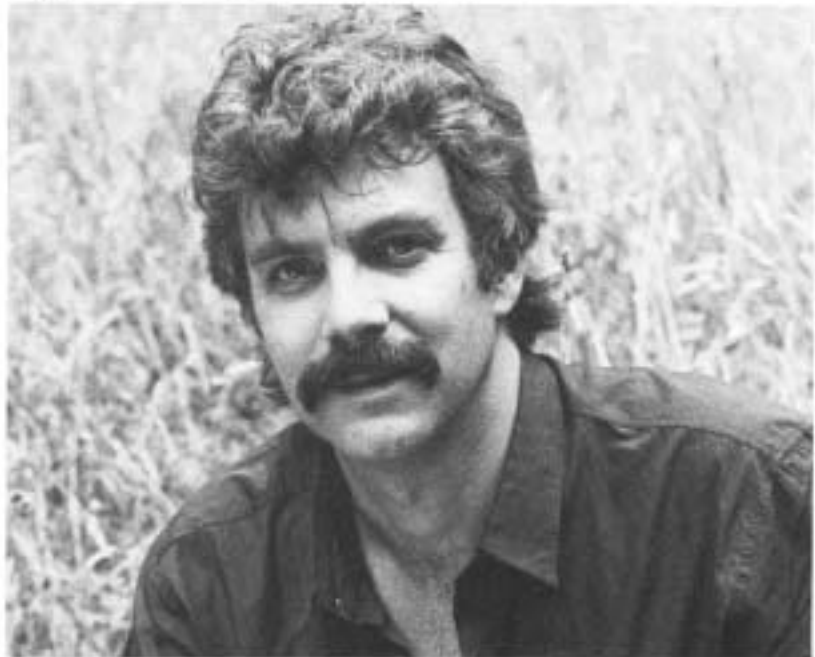
Rush is doing a lot for himself and other acoustic folk musicians. He produces and markets his own albums on his Night Light label and is trying new strategies to reach his natural audience, the members of the baby-boom generation.

It was good to hear Rush, who is traveling and performing selectively these days. He has a fairly generic folk singer's voice — a tender, clear tenor — but he is exceptional in his ability to capture both the romantic and ironic turns of life. Between songs, his storytelling captured the characters who typify his region. He is a good tale spinner.

The poetry of Rush's music is often colloquial and without airs, suggesting ordinary conversation. His feel for the nuance of dialect is strong. At the same time, he admitted the incongruity of his background and his music: "Clean-scrubbed college kids singing the blues," he summed up.

Rush's version of Sleepy John Estes' "Drop Down Mama" was not an attempt to copy Estes but featured Rush's own blues phrasing, droll and emotional.

Rush is a gentle prophet of new folk-music wave



"Driving Wheel" is typical of Rush's own music, telling how even a young man may sometimes feel withered by life. But Rush is not limited to a single elegaic mood. His pithy songwriting skills were evident on "Ladies Love Outlaws," which starts out folksy sentimental ("like babies love stray dogs") only to set you up for a return chorus ("like babies like chain saws").

Rush also had the temerity to introduce a song by Tex Ritter as "awful, but hope you enjoy it." He did the

song as a parody and had the audience mimicking the whiplike sound effects of a song created for a low-budget Hollywood western.

Rush knows how to create a whole-concert experience, balancing the wistfulness of "The Dreamer" with the hard-bitten reality of the blues. But mostly he wants to make folks feel all right even as they consider the problems of living.

The concert was sponsored by The Milwaukee Journal.

Monday
March 9, 1992
35 cents

Serving Nashua and
 Southern New Hampshire
 Volume 122 No. 300

The Telegraph

A night with Tom Rush: Poignant and just plain fun

By RICHARD F. BINDER
 Telegraph Music Critic

The very best thing about Tom Rush is his knack for making an audience just as comfortable as he is. He was at the Center for the Arts Saturday, and darned if he didn't do it again.

Rush's songs ran the gamut from sweet ballads of love like "Quarter Moon," the sad "The Urge for Going," and a new one, "No One Else But You," to hard Delta blues ("Drop Down Mama") — but

of life. "The Child's Song," which isn't about children at all, and followed that with the old "Ladies Love Outlaws." His effortless mixing of silliness with deep philosophy was impressive to behold, even if you didn't like the latter song's unconstructedly sweet sentiments.

Part of Rush's considerable appeal is the quiet way he just stands up there and rambles between songs. With a good collection of jokes, he was in top

form Saturday, his patented child-like "Who, me?" look working overtime. His cleverly subtle jokes, familiar as they are, are still funny.

Another part of his appeal is the way he sings most of the songs he does. He's not trying to convince anyone, he lets the words do that. And he doesn't have any act to grand, he's up there to entertain, and Saturday he did that with a vengeance, if so strong a word can be applied to Rush's unforged style.

We were treated to "the oblige-

tury folk singer singalong," in the form of Woodie Guthrie's "Car Car," a big hit decades ago for Pester, Paul, and Mary. Rush isn't Pester or Paul. His interpretation of the song wasn't a four-on-the-floor Ferrari, it was "Your part is like this: B-b-b-b-b ... It's hard to go b-b-b-b-b when you're laughing."

For the past several years Rush has brought with him Eric Lillerquist and Dean Adrian for guitar backup. They were again with him Saturday, playing as well as ever, out its welcome.

with Lillerquist doing a splendid job on lead, especially in "Drop Down Mama," where he pulled out a truly righteous riff.

The two also provided quiet vocal backup and, as they do each year, sang a duet without Rush. They're good, they really are. They both use their voices artfully, and their arranging skills are more than possible, but they really ought to learn a new song. Frankly, the Beatles' "She Loves You" has worn out its welcome.

The New York Times

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

Tom Rush calls this evening's Carnegie Hall event a "Club 47 concert" in remembrance of the Cambridge coffeehouse that gave him his start when he was at Harvard. "It was a place where you could hear many different voices — both old masters and new," Mr. Rush recalled recently. "Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins and Richie Havens all played there before they became famous."

Today, Mr. Rush, who is 45, lives a "gentleman farmer" existence with his wife, Beverly (one of the performers in the show), and two children on a 600-acre farm in New Hampshire. In the 60's, the singer, who had a long and respected recording career on two major labels, made his reputation as a soft-spoken, powerful interpreter of traditional songs and also as a spotter of emerging talent, who recorded very early work by Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Jackson Browne. After his major label career ended in the mid-70's, Mr. Rush began making his own records in a studio on his farm and set about marketing them to a baby-boom audience by taking out ads in publications like *The New Yorker*.

"Recording for a major label, I would make a royalty of 20 to 30 cents per album," Mr. Rush said. "Selling by direct mail, with an \$8.95 list price, there is a \$6 profit margin. The good news is that you can earn enough money that way to make another record, and that's the object of the game."

Four years ago, Mr. Rush founded Maple Hill, a combined management company, booking agency and record label dedicated to what he called "reconnecting a certain kind of music with its audience." Among other projects, the company handles the management of two acts that will be appearing this evening — the folk pop duo Buskin & Batteau and the comic singer-songwriter Christine Lavin.

At the three-hour show, Mr. Rush will perform a 40- to 50-minute set in the first half, followed by guest artists, each performing for around 20 minutes. In addition to Buskin & Batteau and Miss

Folk: Boston All-Stars

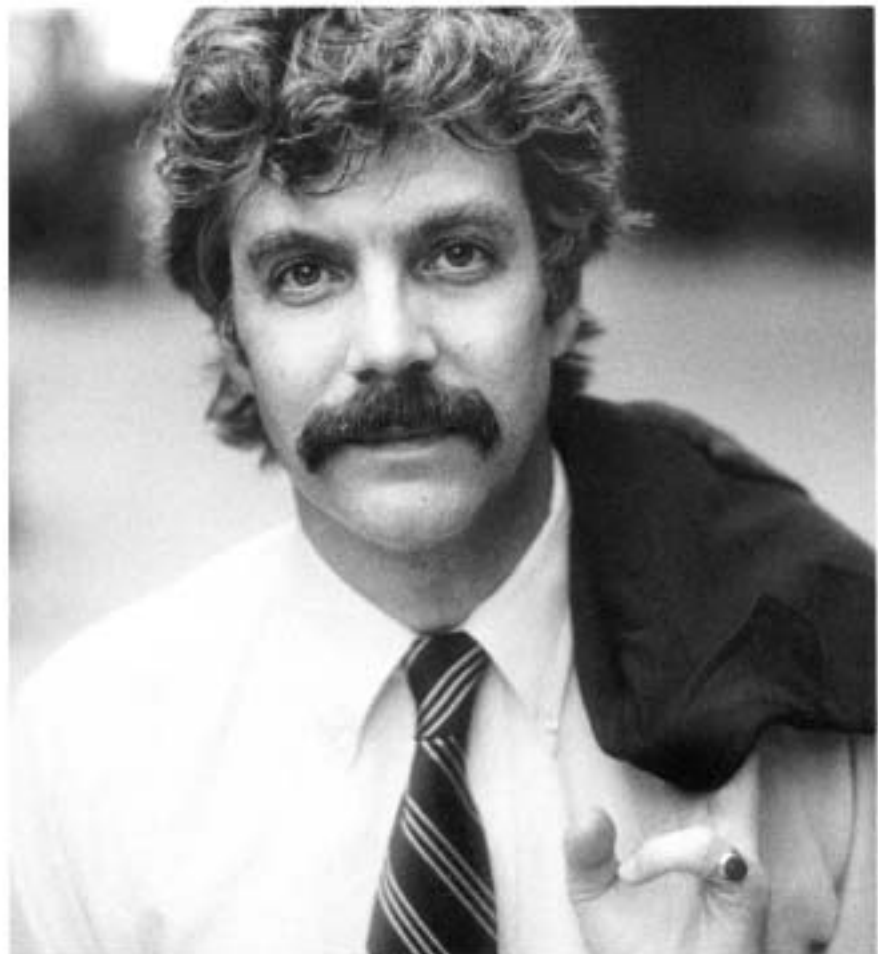


Photo: Maureen Lamikay

Tom Rush tonight at Carnegie Hall.

Lavin, they include Nanci Griffith, an exceptionally gifted country-folk singer and songwriter from Austin, Texas, and Bill Morrissey, a New Hampshire man whose autobiographical songs about New England working-class life owe a great deal to writers like John Steinbeck and Jack Kerouac. The second half of the evening — the "party" half — will feature a jug band made up of Richard Greene, Bill Keith, Maria Muldaur, Geoff Muldaur, Fritz Richmond and John Sebastian.

Mr. Rush entertains no illusions that a massive folk revival is imminent. "I would like to see it spread slowly and stably, rather than have a fad situation, because fads are by definition transitory," Mr. Rush reflected. "With my label, I would be delighted to have 10 albums that each sold 10,000 copies a year forever."

Tonight's concert is at 8 P.M., and tickets are available at the Carnegie Hall box office and through Carnegie Charge (247-7800).

Arts/Entertainment



Tom Rush: Versatile entertainer, not just a folksinger

Rush stirs mood of warmth, humor

By Chris Cobb
Citizen staff writer

All this talk of a folk music revival evokes the pithy comment once made by the brilliant country blues singer Big Bill Broonzy.

When asked whether his style of music was, indeed, folk music Big Bill replied:

"Well, I guess it must be. I sure ain't ever heard no horses singin' and playin'."

Or words to that effect. It was, in fact, a punchy rebuttal to those who categorize and label.

For better or for worse, Tom Rush is forever labelled folk singer. What he is, in fact, is an entertainer who can sing, play the guitar extremely well and make people laugh with apparent ease.

He's had 30 years of practice so he probably should be good at it by now.

At Rush's Nepean concert Monday, the audience was enthusiastic, attentive and children of the fifties and sixties. That's about the Rush demographic.

Rush, wonderfully accomplished at changing musical mood, played sentimental ballads, talking blues, regular country blues and just plain silly stuff, including one hilarious cowboy song by Tex Ritter.

Music review

Tom Rush
Centrepoint Theatre

The 49-year-old singer's humor is hilariously self-deprecating and effective as much for its low-key delivery as anything.

Last evening he brought a warmth and closeness to the theatre that few performers are able to achieve well. It's a knack that comes with experience — an ability to turn even the most austere surroundings (which Centrepoint Theatre certainly isn't) into a coffee house atmosphere.

Rush, an inspiration to a great number of singer-songwriters, has popularized the songs of numerous artists during his career. Joni Mitchell's *Circle Game* and David Wiffen's *Driving Wheel* were both successful songs for him.

For many years, the fickle ways of the music business cast him into the wilderness. He seems to be determined — record company or no record company — to reforge his career.

On the strength of Monday's performance he surely deserves a wider hearing.

And who knows, there could be folk revival . . .

THE PERFORMING SONGWRITER

DECEMBER 1999

Tom Rush

By Rick Petreycik

•For nearly four decades, singer songwriter Tom Rush has been delighting fans worldwide not only with his own songwriting style, but also with an uncanny knack for finding wonderful material from other artists and giving those tunes unique, emotionally charged interpretations through his distinctive guitar style, slightly twisted sense of humor and warm, expressive voice. He cut his teeth in the early '60s as part of Cambridge, Massachusetts' thriving folk music scene, soaking up the stylings of legendary folk and Delta blues masters such as Eric von Schmidt, Bukka White, and Leroy Carr. He honed his craft and within no time was holding down a weekly spot at Cambridge's famous Club 47. A record deal with Elektra soon followed, and during the late 1960s, Rush's recordings for the label would play a major role in introducing material by fledgling song writers Jackson Browne ("These Days"), Joni Mitchell ("Urge for Going"), and James Taylor ("Something in the Way She Moves") to a newer, younger audience that was eager for a more rootsy antidote to the overdone psychedelia that was so characteristic of the period.

"[From the early to late-1960s] I had been recording mainly traditional folk tunes, and I kind of felt I had fished that hole dry," Rush recalls. "I'm sure I was wrong about that, but that was my perception at the moment. Anyway, I was looking for tunes for a new album and not finding them in the places I usually looked. And then along came Joni, Jackson, and James with a silver platter full of wonderfully composed tunes that had this familiar feel to them. They had a very folksy sensibility, but they were more literary lyrically, more sophisticated musically, and very compelling melodically. I go by the visceral response. If a song makes me giggle or gives me goosebumps or makes me cry, that's a good song."

Rush is no slouch with the pen either. Over the past 38 years, he's written some truly remarkable tunes, such as the Chuck Berry inspired, rapid-fire vocal styled "On the Road Again," the introspective "The Dreamer," the classic, bittersweet "No Regrets," and the peaceful "River Song," a newly recorded song featured on Columbia Legacy's *The Very Best of Tom Rush: No Regrets*.

"I write down ideas on little scraps of paper and put them in a folder," Rush says about his songwriting process. "Most times when I write, I start with a scrap of an idea for a lyric — some

phrase that is catchy -and a basic idea of what the song is about and what the feel is. And then I start on the music and then flesh out the words - my feeling being that there are a lot of hit songs with dumb lyrics, but there are no hit songs with dumb music.

"I find songwriting is an incremental process," Rush continues. "I've come to recognize that I have to sit down at eight in the morning and stare at the guitar until noon. And if I do that every day, by the end of a couple of weeks, I'll have some songs. If I don't, I won't. Basically, I'll work on a song for a while and I'll get some more ideas and some things will happen. The music will start to gel and I'll get some more lyrics. Then I'll sort of run out of steam, so I'll put it aside and I'll work on another song for a little while. And then the next day I'll come back to that first song and make a little more progress (on it). I find the early morning - before I'm really awake - as a good creative time to write. The right brain is working better than the left brain and ideas tend to slip out."

For those aspiring songwriters who are thinking of hitting the big time, Rush's advice is pretty straightforward. "Keep writing," he says. "All you need is a guitar and a pencil and paper and you can have a hell of a lot of fun."

The Very Best of Tom Rush:

NO REGRETS (COLUMBIA/LEGACY)

This 17-song anthology functions not only as an impressive retrospective of Tom Rush's colorful 35-year career, but also as an auditory documentary of American folk music history, from the booming Cambridge folk club scene of the early 1960s to the closing of the millennium. Standout tracks include "Mobile-Texas Line," "Urge for Going," "No Regrets," and the newly recorded "River Song," which features guest vocalists Shawn Colvin and Marc Cohn.



For Tom Rush, a change of scene and 'No Regrets'

By Jonathan Takiff
Daily News Staff Writer

When the publicist told me I'd be talking to Tom Rush at his home near Jackson Hole, Wyo., could hardly believe my ears. Rush, for the unenlightened, is the archetype of the New England singer and guitar-strummer, one of the first (of many) of that hearty breed to erase the lines between traditional and contemporary music, between rustic and refined, blues and country, folk, rock and pop.

Underscoring the point is his varied new career-spanning set "The Very Best of Tom Rush - No regrets," just out on Columbia Legacy.

While definitely an outdoorsy type (and a sometime dabbler at farming), Rush is hardly the sort you'd expect to see hanging out with the ski bunnies and megamillionaires like Harrison Ford who now inhabit Jackson hole. A more appropriate sighting spot would be acoustic-music watering holes like the Birchmere Coffee house in Virginia, or the Painted Bride Art Center here in Philly, where the artist will pay a rare visit Sunday.

Rush's career began on the campus of Harvard - where he matriculated and hosted a hootenanny-style folk radio show. That was a stepping stone to Cambridge and Boston coffeehouses, where the lanky, long-haired musician developed his growlingly romantic sound and dexterous guitar skills. Philly was also a big stomping ground for him in the early days, including lotsa gigs at the Main Point and Second Fret coffeehouses.

"Actually, the first place I played was another coffeehouse down the street from the Fret, a real dump where my contracted room and board turned out to be a chaise lounge set up on the stage. Then, in the middle of the night, the owner came barging into the room, shooting at a rat. This was my glorious introduction to show business."

Rush's 1968 "Circle Game" album is widely considered the touchstone of the singer-songwriter movement, and still cited on many a "desert island" top-ten list. In one fell swoop, this set introduced the songs (and jumpstarted the careers) of what

would become the three most -important artists of the new folk movement - Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Jackson Browne. Not too shabby.

A decade or so later, when the music industry had written off guitar strummers as passe and their baby boomer fans as past their music-buying prime, Rush led another battle charge for the movement. He set up his own label and management company (Maple Hill) to give artists like Christine Lavin and Bill Morrissey and Patty Larkin a boost, "to treat them the way I would have liked to have been treated." And he started up a concert series under the name "Club 47 presents" that also introduced the likes of Nanci Griffith, Allison Krauss and Shawn Colvin and brought out the boomers in droves. "I knew they hadn't all died," Rush said. "It would have been in the papers."

A series of his sold out shows at Boston's Symphony Hall was such an eye opener that the guys who put on the Newport Jazz Festival decided to revive the Newport Folk Festival as well.

"My argument with the record-company guys was always that folk should not be treated like a flavor-of-the-month pop music, but as a part of the American fabric, like jazz and blues, with a steady-state presence, with a history that goes back thousands of years."

Eventually, the notion sank in. With yet another surge in earnest strummers led by the likes of Suzanne Vega, Tracy Chapman and Melissa Etheridge, the singer/songwriter movement was back on an even keel in the late 1980s. So when the New Hampshire headquarters of Rush's music business burned in 1990, he decided it wasn't necessary to rebuild. "The scene was sustaining itself pretty well, and still is," said the proud papa.

But that still doesn't explain how he got all the way to Moose, Wyo., to a log cabin in the middle of the Grand Tetons, with a herd of snow-covered bison strolling across the front lawn the other morning as we spoke, and a baby's voice gurgling in the background.

It was not nature that took him there. It was a nature-loving woman, Renee Askins. A wildlife biologist-turned-activist, Askins met Rush while she was at Yale doing some "belated" graduate studies, he says, and then lured him out there to help in her cause reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone.

"The wolves had been gone 60 years," he explained. "Renee thought she'd be there for a year, but it took her

15 to get the job done, to rebuild the pack to a few dozen, because the local ranchers were so opposed to the idea. She even got death threats."

Wolves, Rush adds, have had a "bad rap, due to legends like Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Pigs. Nobody's mauled the tourists yet. We leave that to the bison and the grizzly bears. Truth is, wolves tend to avoid civilization."

A couple of decades his junior, Askins recently re-introduced Rush to the joys of parenthood. They have a five-month old baby girl, Siena, named after the town in Italy where the couple honeymooned.

"I've decided to have my own grandchildren," cracked Rush, who has one child who just graduated from college. "I also have a 16-year-old who lives with Mom in New Hampshire.

"Little babies are great. And now I won't have time to retire with another tuition to pay. It's hard to figure out how that happens. Just a minute ago I was 23. Now I'm 58."

The Salt Lake Tribune

In Folk Music, Tom Rush Is Worth the Wait

BY TOM WHARTON
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

It was 1969 when a group of first-quarter University of Utah students gathered in the office of music teacher Paul Banham for a discussion on folk music. The late professor pulled out a record album and proceeded to play a wonderful rendition of Joni Mitchell's "Circle Game" by a husky-voiced male performer.

Impressed, I asked Banham who the performer was.

"That's Tom Rush," he replied, handing me the album.

I immediately purchased it and the two others I could find at a specialty folk music store. Though meeting Rush once at an outdoor writers conference where his wife Renee Askins of the Wolf Fund was speaking, I waited 28 years to finally hear him in concert.

It was worth the wait. Rush put on a stellar performance in his first Salt Lake concert Saturday night at the University of Utah's intimate Fine Arts Auditorium.

And, surprisingly, at least a few other Salt Lake folk music enthusiasts had heard of the man who influenced better known stars such as James Taylor, Garth Brooks, Nanci Griffith, Shawn Colvin and Bill Morrissey.

Many in the audience of close to 400 clutched old, weathered long-play records in hopes that the veteran singer would sign them after the show.

He hung around and did just that.

But, during the concert, Rush helped answer the

■ Utah Symphony, Widespread Panic reviews B-6

question Banham asked so long ago:

"Who are the folk in folk music?"

The folk in Rush's world include those who died in epic floods or strange old men in lonely bars after broken romances. They are children growing up and leaving home. They are cowboys who kill coyotes, soldiers returning from war or ladies who fall in love with outlaws.

Some of the folk in Rush's repertoire of songs are sad. Others are happy. And many are simply funny.

Rush has moved from the East Coast to Moose, Wyo. He talked about Askins' successful effort to restore wolves into the Yellowstone ecosystem.

"Having restored the wolves, we're now trying to find two breeding Democrats," he quipped.

And, as for trying to understand computers and the Internet, the Harvard graduate admitted being frustrated "by an alarming increase in the things I know nothing about."

One thing he does know is how to play a guitar. Whether playing the intricate strains of the instrumental "Rockport Sunday" or using a table knife to strum out the hard-hitting "Galveston Flood," Rush's guitar work enhanced his vocals.

There is something satisfying about sitting in a small auditorium listening to a folk singer use nothing but a guitar and a voice while trying to make sense of life and love.

In the case of Tom Rush, it was worth the 28-year wait.

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

The voice of Santa Barbara County since 1855

142ND YEAR, NO. 330

POP MUSIC REVIEWS

Tom Rush in a rare performance

By **STEVEN LIBOWITZ**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

With the crush of singer-songwriters descending on Santa Barbara — and the world — in recent months, one couldn't be blamed for forgetting what it is that sets a true master apart from the rest. Thank goodness Tom Rush is still around to remind us.

The 57-year-old Rush, now a part-time Montecito resident, offered an object lesson in everything a folk singer can and should be in his recent solo performance at the Coach House, which, surprisingly, represented his Santa Barbara debut. As he has for his 35-year career, Rush put everything together at the Coach

House, from storytelling full of wholesome, down-home flavors and quick-witted humor to songs both original and borrowed delivered with a veteran's rough-hewed but resonant voice and warm demeanor. In the process, he proved for those of us who haven't seen him play for far too long that there simply isn't a more consummate performer in the genre.

Rush hasn't forgotten who the folk are in folk music. In his two sets, he recalled the great era of traditionalists, covering songs such as Bukka White's "Panama Limited" and Eric Von Schmidt's "Wasn't That a Mighty Storm," while maintaining the great tradition of political protest in his own "Cowboy's Paean," which hilariously skewers coyote hunters in Wyoming, where Rush has lived for the past 20 years. Many of his

newer songs were inspired by his life as a Wyoming farmer, but he's still enough of a romantic to pen "What an Old Lover Knows," and a grizzled but still frisky rascal to sing "One Good Man." "No Regrets," one of Rush's early hits, remains as poignant in 1998 as it was in 1968.

But what truly makes Rush a national treasure is his unparalleled knack for interpretation. Long ago, he recorded the definitive version of "Circle Game," written by Joni Mitchell, one of several future stars Rush is credited with discovering. He played that song with a beautiful, deliberate pace, evoking new nuances and shades of emotions even after so many years. But that was only one from a wide swath of styles that lesser talents wouldn't dream of covering: Lyle Lovett's "If

I Had a Boat" and "Drift Away" (a 1973 hit for Dobie Gray). Lots of performers sing other people's songs. Rush is one of the few who makes them his own not by inhabiting them but by endeavoring to understand the writer's intent, and then filtering it through his own unerring sensibilities. It's a gift that's all too rare nowadays, with maybe only someone like k.d. lang up to the task. Not surprisingly, the audience filled with baby boomers was enraptured.

Lately, Rush has taken advantage of his well-earned right to take it easy, traveling and performing most selectively. But now that he has chosen to make a winter home on the South Coast, let's hope Santa Barbara becomes a regular part of his concert itinerary for years to come.



ASSOCIATE

Resident Associate Program

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560

Rare Musical Riches from the Age of Louis XIV

Smithsonian Chamber Players

Graced by the intimate surroundings and superb acoustics of the National Museum of American History's Hall of Musical Instruments, the internationally acclaimed **Smithsonian Chamber Players** present two programs epitomizing the musical glories of the glittering reign of France's "Sun King," the legendary Louis XIV.

Artistic Directors **James Weaver** and **Kenneth Slowik** have assembled a stellar ensemble of international artists—all recognized specialists in the extraordinary recreation of music as it was heard in its original performances—for two performances of François Couperin's elegantly styled *pieces d'occasion*, *Concerts royaux* and *Les Gouts-réunis*.

The concerts are cosponsored by the National Museum of American History, the Friends of Music at the Smithsonian, and the Resident Associate Program.

(Code: 929-501-01) Fri., Feb. 27, 8 p.m.

(Code: 929-501-02) Sat., Feb. 28, 8 p.m.

Hall of Musical Instruments

American History Building

Members—\$10; Nonmembers—\$12;

Full-time students with IDs—\$5

Washington Dixieland All-Stars

Champagne Brunch Concert

The exuberant, rollicking sounds of **Van Perry** and the **Washington Dixieland All-Stars** enliven a winter Sunday morning in a concert of music tracing the history of jazz from New Orleans to New York.

Van Perry, leader and bassist for the Washington Dixieland All-Stars, has performed with such celebrated artists as Billie Holiday, Ethel Waters, and Helen O'Connell.

Participants enjoy a light brunch of pastries, coffee, and libations—including champagne—either before or after the concert in the elegant reception suite of the National Museum of American History.

Club 47® at the Smithsonian



Pete Kennedy.

Tom Rush.

It started out as a progressive jazz club, but 47 Mt. Auburn Street in Harvard Square, the original Club 47, soon evolved into a mecca of folk music in the 1960s. One denizen of Club 47, a Harvard student named **Tom Rush**, was inspired to change his major from biology to ballads, eventually becoming one of the most influential figures in the folk music of that exhilarating era.

Today Tom Rush is recreating folk's golden age at Club 47 in places such as Carnegie Hall, showcasing legendary folk figures and their 1980s protégés in a dazzling acoustic renaissance.

In this Club 47 meeting, guitar stylist **Pete Kennedy** completes the bill, and **Dick Cerrí**, producer and host of the popular Washington radio program, "Music Americana," joins Tom and Pete for lively discussions of their music and folk's grand tradition.

(Code: 929-606) Wed., Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m.

Baird Auditorium

Natural History Building

Members—\$10; Nonmembers—\$15

Club 47 is a registered trademark and service mark of Maple Hill Productions, Inc.

Emerson String Quartet

Fourth Concert in Complete Beethoven Quartet Cycle

Available tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis at the door on the evening of the performance.

Internationally acclaimed for the virtuosity and dynamism of its performances, the **Emerson String Quartet** continues its traversal of the complete Beethoven quartets with performances of the *E-flat Major Quartet, Op. 74*, "The Harp," the "Serenade" *Quartet, Op. 95 in F minor*, and the *Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127*.

Sat., Feb. 21, 7 p.m.

Baird Auditorium

Natural History Building

Members—\$14; Nonmembers—\$16

Great Dramatic Works on Film

On the screen, comedy and tragedy alike take on new meaning as filmmakers interpret masterpieces originally written for the stage. This film series features outstanding cinematic versions of four works by major playwrights. **Jack Jorgens**, author of *Shakespeare on Film*, introduces each screening and provides program notes.

- March 2 *Major Barbara* (1941, b/w, 115 min.) Directed by Gabriel Pascal. Starring Wendy Hiller and Rex Harrison.

- March 9 *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952, color, 95 min.) Directed by Anthony Asquith. Starring Michael Redgrave and Joan Greenwood.

- March 16 *Three Sisters* (1974, color, 165 min.) Directed by Laurence Olivier. Starring Olivier, Alan Bates, and Joan Plowright.

- March 23 *The Caretaker* (1963, b/w, 105 min.) Directed by Clive Donner. Starring Robert Shaw, Donald Pleasance, and Alan Bates.

(Code: 430-105) Mon., March 2, 9, 16, 23, 7 p.m.

Auditorium

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Members—\$18; Nonmembers—\$24

Individual Screenings:

(Code: 430-105-01) Mon., March 2, 7 p.m.

(Code: 430-105-02) Mon., March 9, 7 p.m.

(Code: 430-105-03) Mon., March 16, 7 p.m.

(Code: 430-105-04) Mon., March 23, 7 p.m.

Members—\$5; Nonmembers—\$6.50

Fees are nonrefundable.

The Washington Post

PERFORMING ARTS

CLUB 47: Tom Rush & Friends



Tom Rush

The Kennedy Center Concert Hall was packed and the stage crowded with musicians and friends Saturday night as Tom Rush celebrated his 25th anniversary in folk music.

Over the course of three hours and dozens of songs, Rush and his fellow performers not only celebrated the past and the traditions that link one generation of folk musicians to the next, but they also made the future for acoustic music look bright indeed.

The staging was as cozy as could reasonably be expected in the Concert Hall. Tables were set up behind the musicians so that members of the Washington folk community, including songwriters Bill and Taffy Danoff and singer Jonathan Edwards, could be seated close by. And much of the music cast an intimate spell as well, beginning with Nanci Griffith's tenderly evocative songs about growing up in the South.

Griffith was followed by several other young and promising songwriters: Robert Earl Keen Jr., Bill Morrissey, and Buskin & Batteau. Keen was the evening's revelation. In introducing him, Griffith likened him to such gifted songwriters as Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark; her lofty comparison nevertheless seemed right on target by the time Keen completed his wry, whimsical and all-too-brief performance.

Time didn't allow Rush and his well-known guests Peter Rowan, Mark O'Connor and Emmylou Harris to stray far from familiar material. Rowan was in especially good voice, and his vocally demanding Tex-Mex repertoire was greatly enhanced by O'Connor's sensitive and imaginative fiddling.

Harris opened with a gorgeous version of Jesse Winchester's "Songbird" and filled out her set with other worthy ballads by Van Zandt, Paul Simon, and John Lennon and Paul McCartney, each seemingly written for her breathtaking soprano.

Staggered throughout the show, Rush's performances neatly combined the best of his recordings. Confessional ballads such as "No Regrets" and "Urge for Going" contrasted sharply with the sax-powered "Lost My Drivin' Wheel" and the surging vocal choruses that made "Galveston Flood," the evening's first encore, so compelling.

— Mike Joyce

RICHARD HOWARD