

# BAEZ

by Lucia McKelvey

**J**oan Baez has been quietly creative in her home in Carmel, busy writing her autobiography, *And A Voice to Sing With*, and also recording a new album titled *Recently*. Raising her teenage son keeps her on her toes, as well as her continued humanitarian work, which seems to be an ongoing, integral part of her life.

In fact, when most of us think of Joan, we think of her speaking out as well as singing out on behalf of the downtrodden of the world. Her social consciousness seems to have come from her father, a Mexican-born physicist, who has always supported Joan in all her undertakings. As a brown-skinned girl in white schools, she herself knew what it was like to be on the outside.

She was, however, appreciated for her artistic talents, and not only singing, but acting and drawing too. By the time she went to college she was bold enough to take her "achingly pure soprano" and acoustic guitar to Cambridge, Massachusetts coffee houses where her musical career began.

In fact, music and boyfriends won out over college, and Joan's "gypsy" roots were planted. And in *A Voice to Sing With* she takes us through her childhood, her relationship with Dylan (yes, they were lovers), her travels to Vietnam, spending Christmas 1970 in a bomb shelter in Hanoi during Nixon's intense "Christmas bombing," to her current travels to Central and South America, and performances in "Live Aid" and the "Amnesty International Tour."

We also read about her difficult marriage with political activist David Harris, the father of her son. We meet her women friends, sisters and mother who have sustained her through hard times. And we learn she is still (kind of) looking for "Mr. Right," though she admits she needs to live alone, and finds solace in her house from the busy and demanding life she leads. Intensely fearful of performing, she also tells us about her battle with anxiety and her work with psychiatrists to move through it.

Interviewed recently in the *L.A. Weekly*, following are some comments she made to Craig Lee, her interviewer:

"It dawned on me recently that I'm a survivor of the 60's . . . my records survive with people in their homes. But I'm not rock & roll. So there's not a single radio station—except maybe new ones like the Wave—that will play my records. If you're not rock & roll you're dead. So it's miraculous that I can go anywhere and still get an audience."

[In regard to Live Aid:] "Rock & rollers are good-hearted and naive in a lot of ways. . . There's a lot of heart, but they're not politically sophisticated in any sense at all. . . Even-



tually real social change is going to involve risk, getting yourself arrested, giving up a part of your career if necessary because you're willing to put yourself on the line."

[About the Amnesty International Tour:] "Poor Bill Graham who organized that, he doesn't know what to do with me, because I'm an obnoxious, strong woman, and he loathes dealing with strong women, or strong anything! . . . I realized he was mortified about what I would actually do, because it was a rock show—I can't stand up there and do 'Silver Dagger.' I said, 'Bill, I won't embarrass you.'"

"Somebody pointed out to me that in the 60's we had a movement, a momentum—we had music, we had compassion, we had each other. We had *glue*, and we don't have any glue these days. There are little movements but no big feel-

ing of cohesion. But yes, I think that will come back."

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Joan's newest album is produced by Danny Goldberg on Gold Castle Records. It "seems to be doing pretty well," she says. The songs include Peter Gabriel's "Biko" about South African martyr Steven Biko; U2's "MLK" (a tribute to Martin Luther King); "Let's Us Break Bread Together" (a gospel medley); the R & B favorite of Aretha Franklin, "Do Right Woman"; "Asimbonaga," a soulful tribute to black South Africans; and two self-penned ballads for her ex-husband Harris, and her son Gabriel. "I hope people buy it because I think it's one of the best I've made." Baez will be at the Hult Center on October 30. Ticket information is at 687-5000.

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