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**Maturing Arlo 'terrific'
in Mac Court show**

By **MARTY WESTERMAN**
Of the Emerald

The childish Arlo Guthrie of Woodstock and Alice's Restaurant is gone, and in his place is a maturing musician who gave a terrific, mellow performance to an audience of nearly 3700 at Mac Court Monday night.

Arlo shared the spotlight with Ry Cooder, a pretty much unknown but excellent guitarist and mandolin picker, who opened the show. From the first, Cooder had the audience with him. "We've (the musicians) been on the road now for seven weeks, and I'd like to play this song to describe how your hands feel after seven weeks on the road." Ry launched into a song called "Pig Meat," then did about 40 minutes of blues and country music, switching from acoustic to electric guitar, then to mandolin, and back. He played slide tunes equally well on both electric and acoustic guitar, though the techniques are quite different.

Cooder will have an album coming out in January called "Into the Purple Valley," on which will appear "How Can Ya Keep On Movin'" and "Denomination Blues," which he performed at the concert.

He also did a tune on mandolin called "Goin' to Brownsville," a blues number he picked up from a sleepy black blues player he had studied in California. As he worked into "Brownsville," he became the man he had studied—shouting out the lyrics and stamping his feet, holding out a word note here and there to get back in tune with his mandolin, then going back off into the blues.

When Arlo came on stage, Cooder played backup with Arlo's band.

"There's a change comin'," Arlo's backup pianist, Jimmy Dickinson explained. "Arlo is too good to just stick with Alice's Restaurant all his life. His music is improving all the time and his style is changing with it. He's wanted to do Jimmy Rodgers (music) for six years now, but he's never felt he was up to it until now . . . Instead of ending (the concert) with some pounding elephant rock now he does a mellow concert and lets the audience down easy. He's trying to help 'em."

There was no overpowering music from a stupendous sound system; there were no brash performers. For the first time this year at a Mac Court concert the audience's applause was louder than the sound system.

Arlo started off with a country-western number, moved to the piano for "Days Are Short," which will appear on his next album, "Photograph," then played a tune called "1913" which his father Woody composed to describe the shattered Christmas of coal miners in Calumet, Mich. during a time of union tension.

Other highlights of the evening were Arlo favorites like "Stealin'," "Ring Around the Rosy Rag," (my friends got arrested for doin' ring-around-the-rosy in a Philadelphia park wading pool when I wasn't with 'em—usually I get arrested with my friends—so I wrote down this song as a protest), "Coming' into Los Angeles," Jimmy Rodger's "1000 miles Away From Home," and "Don't Think Twice."

Arlo made his reputation in New York as an excellent guitar picker, and "Don't Think Twice" demonstrated this fact. He began the song solo, picking carefully but rapidly at his guitar, and one by one his backup men joined in—Gimmer Nicholson on bass, Ry Cooder on mandolin, John Cravotte on drums, John Pillow on acoustic guitar (who also did harmony), and Jimmy Dickinson on piano.

Most of the selections Arlo played were either from his "Washington County" album, or from "Photograph," which is to be released early next year.

He wore blue denim jeans and a work shirt, orange glasses, and calf-high eskimo boots. When he sang he would keep time by alternately tapping the toe of one foot while he tapped the heel of the other, so it looked as if he was dancing to his own music. Before going on stage he said, "I don't like anybody interpreting the music I do. I just do it. I have an outline in mind of what I'm gonna do but I never know for sure 'til I get up there (on stage)."

He was agitated before his performance, as a number of his old friends were in the audience—among them Ray Brock, of Alice's Restaurant fame, who now lives just outside Eugene. But as the concert progressed, he loosened up, he played more relaxed, and he talked more.

Listening to Arlo's reedy voice spin yarns was as much fun as hearing him sing. For the first few numbers he just made small comments as background, but after the Jimmy Rodgers' number, he talked about bringing dope back from Europe, and being paranoid on the plane. He noted that there were people for and against dope, and that the man at customs was just waiting to bust people coming in with dope. "What are ya gonna do when you suddenly get paranoid on the plane?" Somebody from the audience shouted, "Eat it!" and Arlo said,

Review

"That's fine if you only got a little, but how about if you've got this much?" and he held his arms out. "You gotta start eating as soon as you get on the plane in Europe."

Then Arlo moved onto the "dope crisis begins at home," describing the typical dope crisis household, where brother is sealed in the upstairs bathroom smoking, mom is in the kitchen with bottles marked "Mom's Dope" on the windowsills, sis is downstairs with the guy next door ("that's not actually part of the dope crisis") and dad is out in the garage where he has been for the past four years—"nobody knows what he's doin' out there, but he always comes out talking fast about something with his eyes shinin'." The remedy, in such a situation, Arlo explained, was to get everything out in the open—get all the crisis stuff put on the kitchen table—even sis and the guy next door—and have the family gather round for an open discussion and sharing session. "It might not solve the crisis but it'll get ya a lot of free dope," he added.

"Lay Down Little Doagies," off the "Washington County" album, was described by Arlo as an "animal recycling ballad." "The cowboys would sing to their cattle as they drove for two months up the trail to the stockyards. They knew and loved their cattle—talked to them, even gave 'em names. But they never told the cattle where they was going. This song is about a cowboy who told his cattle where they was goin'," he said. Then the band struck up the introduction—for about two minutes. "These fellows was out on the range for two months," Arlo broke in, strumming away, "and this is about all they had to do."

The applause and cheers brought Arlo, Ry, and the band back for one encore, a number off the "Photograph" album which Arlo didn't name. Then they all left. But the audience could have sat through another two hours of encores.

The concert was low-key, and pleasant on the ears . . . about as loud as your stereo when you are listening to an album. Surprisingly there was no trouble with the infamous Mac Court acoustics—perhaps that's because when there is no overpowering sound you don't get overpowering echo and distortion.

See pages 1, 6, and 7 for related story.

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