

Alan Gerber

Biography

Where energy, intellect and an unbridled passion for life intersect, there you'll find the music of Alan Gerber. Possessing a rock 'n roll swagger born from years in the musical trenches tempered by a soulful poet's heart, Gerber has won a devoted legion of fans drawn to his cleverly crafted lyrics and engaging live performances.

"I'm really into the physicality of music, of rock 'n roll and R&B," Gerber says, "but I'm also really into poetry and intelligent lyrics, talking about something that is important to me and hopefully other people. My songs are stories about life."

Gerber has an extensive musical resume that includes working with Bob Dylan, Leon Russell and the Doors' legendary producer Paul Rothchild, but these days he's entered his most satisfying musical chapter yet as he recruited his son and daughter to join him on his latest project *The Grand and the Small*. Family and music are at the core of Gerber's life and blending the two on his new album is especially gratifying. "We were playing for 15,000 people at the Montreal Jazz Festival and people were going nuts," Gerber recalls of performing with 18-year-old Hannah and 21-year-old Eli. "I'm so happy that they are on stage with me. When you look over and there's your son and daughter, it adds something really special to it."

Whether he's performing with his children and a full band or just alone on stage, Gerber is a riveting live performer who has developed a reputation for holding an audience in the palm of his hand. Inuvik's Miki O'Kane describes a recent show: "Gerber delivered an evening of musical delights. Hands clapping, toes tapping, smiles broadening – the fun of boogie woogie, the soul of rock n' roll, and the sentiment of sweet lyrics were enjoyed that evening. And Alan became one of us as he invited us to sing along---which of course we did enthusiastically---laughed and cajoled with us at the break and jammed with local musicians."

"There are a bunch of people walking around our town today with their hair still messed up...a kind of euphoric shell-shock," Ron Scott proclaimed after a recent Gerber show at the Sam Waller Museum in Manitoba. "Electric, eclectic, exquisite---last night's show was one wild whitewater trip! Every bend brought another splash in the face! Exhilarating! How could this boat not flip over at these speeds in such big waves? In the end he brought us through safely...all sunburned, soaking wet and grinning ear to ear!! Can we go again?!"

One of the most impressive things about Gerber is his ability to create albums that simmer with the same energy and conviction he brings to his live show. *The Grand and the Small* is proof. He serves up such musical gems as the percolating "Should Be Happy," which shows the vibrant, bluesy vocal attack that is a hallmark of Gerber's signature sound and the pointed social commentary of the opening track "Zombie Nation."

Among the collection's many highlights is "Gordian Knot," penned by Gerber and Patrick Wiggins. "I love that song," Gerber confesses. "The Gordian Knot was a myth from ancient Persia. There was this big knot of rope and whomever could untie this big knot would be the ruler of all and would have unlimited power. Alexander The Great

came along, tried to untie the knot, he couldn't, so he took out his sword and just sliced it in half and so became the ruler. The song goes on to talk about people creating their own Gordian Knot, their own insanity. It's a really unique song."

Gerber covers a lot of lyrical territory on *The Grand and the Small* from humorous tunes like "Funky Knees" and "Weasel Jerky" to the tenderhearted ballad "Believe." "Me and My Dog" is a clever salute to man's best friend and then there's poignant "Hope, In $\frac{3}{4}$ Time," which spawned the album's title with such lines as: "I'm hoping I'm old enough now to celebrate mystery, to honor its presence in the grand and the small."

Celebrating life's mysteries and illuminating the human condition through music has long been Gerber's mission. Growing up in Chicago, Gerber soaked up a variety of musical influences starting with his mother's gentle hands on the family's Wurlitzer baby grand piano and rollicking boogie woogie blues sessions courtesy of his uncles, one a businessman and the other a corporate attorney, but both musicians at heart. By the time Gerber hit his teens, he was performing in a local rock band and made his first record at 15 on Earic Records, a subsidiary of Chess.

At 19, he moved to Los Angeles, where he was recruited to join Rhinoceros, an elite band of musicians handpicked by The Doors' producer Paul Rothchild to sign with Elektra Records. After two years, Gerber escaped the confines of the band environment to launch a solo career, debuting with an acclaimed album on Shelter Records. The lead single, "Big Bad Mama," became the pick of the week in *Billboard* with *Record World*, *Cashbox* and other industry trades also showing Gerber the love in glowing reviews. It was an auspicious debut that set the tone for a lifetime of musical innovation. In the years that followed, he relocated to Canada and put down roots while continuing to write, record and tour throughout the world.

His love affair with music has never waned. "I love to create the music, the words, performing and recording, the whole process," he says. "I love the feeling when I'm playing and moving people, making them feel the way I felt when I wrote that song. They are sending energy back to me that makes my energy more than I ever imagined. It's that wonderful flow between performer and audience. I love it all!"

On *The Grand and the Small*, a lifetime of experience coalesces into an arresting collection of songs. "There's some deep meaning in so many of the songs, and on the other hand there's 'Weasel Jerky,'" he says with a smile. "That's going from the ridiculous to the sublime, covering the whole scope. To me, that's what it's about because real life isn't all one or the other. It's a combination of those things weaving themselves around each other."

Life is a colorful tapestry and so is Alan Gerber's music. Blending humor, heart and hope into songs that will make you laugh, cry, sigh and surrender is Gerber's special gift. That's what music does at its best, and it's what Alan Gerber has done for a lifetime.