

H.A.R.P. [Holly Near, Arlo Guthrie, Ronnie Gilbert and Pete Seeger]

– a quartet who only ever played six concerts.

Holly Near - **Bio**

Holly was born 6th June 1949 in Ukiah, California. Raised on a farm till the age of ten, her family settled in Ukiah during her teenage years. A child television actress, she studied drama at UCLA, and later took a role in the Broadway production of “**Hair.**” She appeared in the movie “**Slaughterhouse Five**” [1972] and on television shows such as “**All In The Family,**” “**Room 222**” and “**Mod Squad.**” Accompanying Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland, Near took part in the controversial 1971 Fonda produced review, “**Free The Army,**” which toured Vietnam in an attempt to get the US government to withdraw its troops. In 1973 Holly released her debut solo album “**Hang In There**” on her own Redwoods Records label. She was awarded the “Album of the Year” NAIRD [National Association of Independent Record Distributors] for her 1979 recording “**Imagine My Surprise.**” Employing folk/country tinged material, and along with Cris Williamson and Meg Christian, Near spearheaded the feminist/women’s music through the nineteen seventies and into the nineties. She has recorded over twenty discs, including collaborations with Ronnie Gilbert and Inti-Illimani. Holly Near’s autobiography “**Fire In The Rain.....Singer In The Storm**” was published in 1990. She subsequently toured with a musical stage show that was based on her life. Near was recently signed to Applesseed Records.

Arthur Wood

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Arlo Guthrie - **Bio**

Arlo was born 10th July 1947 in Coney Island, New York, the eldest child of Woody Guthrie. At the age of three he is purported to have played harmonica and danced for Leadbelly. Pete Seeger was a regular visitor to the Guthrie home during Arlo’s childhood. Arlo’s mother Marjorie, began teaching him to play guitar when he turned six. Educated privately in Brooklyn and Stockbridge, Massachusetts, he went on to attend Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana. Returning to the East coast six months later, he was soon performing in the folk clubs of New York’s Greenwich Village, Boston and countless other cities. His debut album for Reprise “**Alice’s Restaurant**” [1967], and the rambling anti-war anthem of the same name that it featured established his notoriety as a performer, resulted in the 1969 Arthur Penn directed movie of the same name which starred Arlo. He appeared at the Woodstock Festival in 1969, and in 1972 Arlo enjoyed his greatest hit single with Steve Goodman’s “City Of New Orleans.” It reached No. 18. By the middle of the seventies, Guthrie and Pete Seeger began an occasional performing partnership that survives to his day. During this period he toured and recorded a number of albums with his five-piece band, Shenandoah. The mid-eighties saw Guthrie create his own label, Rising Son Records, on which he has gradually acquired and reissued his entire Warner Brothers catalogue of albums. “**20 Grow Big Songs**” [Rising Son] an album of Woody Guthrie penned children’s songs, that featured Arlo, his brother Joady, his sister Nora and numerous other Guthrie offspring, was nominated for a Grammy in 1992. During the same year Arlo acquired Trinity Church in Great Barrington, near Stockbridge, Mass. which was the scene of “**Alice’s Restaurant.**” The building became headquarters for Arlo’s record label and also the Guthrie Centre and the Guthrie Foundation, non-profit community service charities. During 1994 Arlo starred as an ageing hippie [perfect typecasting ?] in the network television show “**Byrds Of Paradise.**” With increasing commitments to the Centre and Foundation, Arlo continues to record and perform on an occasional basis.

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Ronnie Gilbert - **Bio**

Ronnie was born 7th September 1926 in New York and first sang with the Washington D.C. based, Priority Ramblers. Invited to join The Weavers, the quartet made its debut at the Village Vanguard, Greenwich Village, just before Christmas 1949. According to Gilbert, “*We came in to play for ten days, and ended up staying for six months.*” The following year their rendition of Leadbelly’s “Goodnight Irene” was the No. 1 record in America for, a then, unprecedented fourteen weeks. A number of other hit

singles and albums followed. Lee Hays and Pete Seeger, in particular, were blacklisted by the McCarthy [House of Un-American Activities Committee] trials of the early fifties, so The Weavers disbanded for three years. Once they reformed, they never again achieved the same degree of success. In 1963 they played at Carnegie Hall to commemorate their 15th anniversary as a quartet, and then disbanded. Gilbert went on to work as a solo artist, made a number of albums and also appeared in on-Broadway and off-Broadway plays. For a number of years she also worked as a psychotherapist. The Weavers undertook another reunion in November 1980, at which time Gilbert met and began an occasional recording and performing collaboration with Holly Near. In 1982, and dedicated to founder member Lee Hays who died in August 1981, **“Wasn’t That A Time,”** a documentary film of The Weavers final reunion was released. In 1993 Gilbert published a book titled **“Mother Jones : Face To Face With the Most Dangerous Woman In America”** about the life of Mary Harris Jones, the labour activist and campaigner. She later developed and took part in a stage play, based on her book. Based on Studs Terkel’s book **“Coming Of Age”** she starred in another play, co-written with Jon Marans, wherein ordinary folk relate stories, vignettes and songs pointing out that there is life beyond the traditional retirement age of 65. Gilbert is currently working on her autobiography.

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Pete Seeger - **Bio**

Pete was born 3rd May 1919 in New York City. His mother, Ruth Crawford was a violin teacher, while his father, Charles, was a respected musicologist. Both were faculty members of Juilliard School of Music. Pete learned to play the ukulele, guitar and banjo at an early age and developed a lifelong passion for folk music when he attended his first folk festival, in North Carolina, aged sixteen. For a time he travelled with folk archivist and field recorder, Alan Lomax. To further absorb folk music across the length and breadth of America, he became a hobo for a time. And he also found time to attend Harvard University – well for two years. He was a member of the Almanac Singers by the early nineteen forties and **“Talking Union And Other Union Songs”** [1941] was the first of three recordings they made for Moe Asch’s Folkways label. Pete served in the US Army during World War II. The Almanac’s featured Lee Hays, Millard Lampell and Woody Guthrie. In 1949, Seeger formed The Weavers with Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman. Within a few years they became the nation’s most popular group, but Seeger was blacklisted in the McCarthy Un-American Activities – Anti Communist - trials of the early fifties. Pete Seeger released a 10-inch record called 'Darling Corey' in 1950, his first as a solo artist for Folkways Records. During this time he also began editing/publishing the folk song magazine, Sing Out. Based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania it continues to this day under the guidance of its current Editor, Mark Moss. The Weavers reformed in 1955, but with Seeger also working as a solo act, in 1958 Erik Darling took Pete’s place in the group. Seeger took an active part in the 1963 and 1981 Weavers reunions. By the early sixties Seeger was signed to Columbia Records [CBS.Sony]. In a career that has produced in excess of one-hundred albums, he has also released work on the Vanguard, Warner Bros. and other imprints. The July 1963 Newport Folk Festival featured Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and Phil Ochs. The folk-protest movement was about reach its peak. In January 1964 Seeger’s version of Malvina Reynold’s song "Little Boxes," entered Billboard's Top 100. It became his only entry on the pop charts. That said, the Byrds took Seeger’s song “Turn! Turn! Turn!” to No. 1 on the Billboard Top 100 in 1965. During the summer of 1969 Pete launched the restored sloop 'Clearwater' on the Hudson River. The boat became the focal point of his environmental campaigning over the ensuing decades. Titled **“Where Have All The Flowers Gone,”** Pete Seeger’s autobiography was published in 1993. In 1994 he received the Presidential Medal Of The Arts, and was elected to the Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame in 1996. That year, Seeger won the Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album for **'Pete.'** In April 1999 Seeger travelled to Cuba to accept the Felix Varela Medal, that nation's highest honour for *"his humanitarian and artistic work in defence of the environment and against racism."* He is undoubtedly America’s greatest living folk musician, bar none.

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