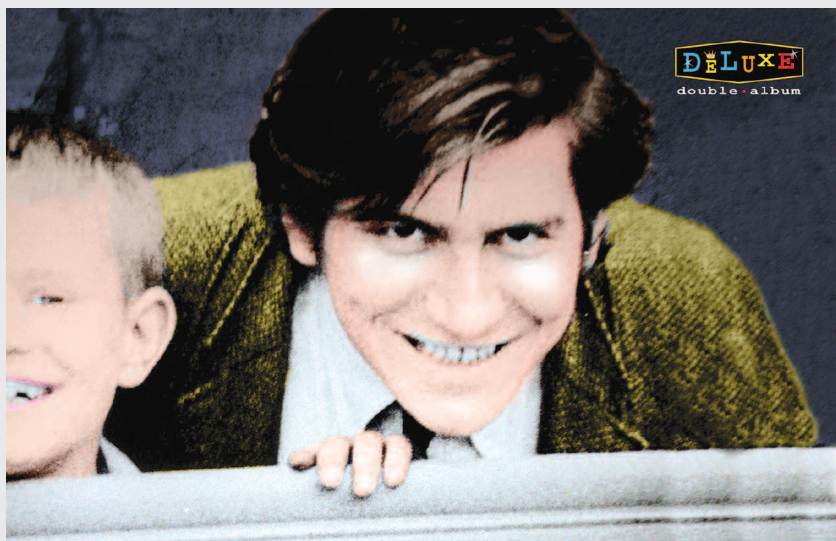


What Would Phil Ochs Write Today Had He Not Hanged Himself?



Malcolm Stone and Creative Associates Present
PHIL OCHS
author of "Changes" and "There But For Fortune"
only Montreal appearance this season
Saturday, October 22, 1966 at 8:30 p.m.
Salle Claude Champagne

"It's not enough to know the world is absurd and restrict yourself to point out the fact. Still, I am forced to go on because I don't want the world to be left in the hands of the Hitlers. This one thing I feel is a driving force: that I get repelled by certain things or they strike me as funny or weird or strange or ridiculous and my response comes out in the form of a song."—Phil Ochs, 1940-1976

I've always said the spirit we felt in the late 1960s withered away at the end of a rope on Long Island in the house of the sister of folksinger Phil Ochs. Unlike his contemporary (and constant Greenwich Village competitor) Bob Dylan, who has admitted he used folk music as a stepping-stone to be a rock star, Ochs was the real deal.

"Look outside the window. There's a woman being grabbed. They've dragged her to the bushes and now she's being stabbed. Maybe we should call the cops and try to stop

the pain but Monopoly is so much fun, I'd hate to blow the game."—"Small Circle Of Friends"

Ochs not only pointed out the inconsistencies of a society run amok, he was insightful, almost like an investigative journalist. When he wrote about the draft, he was hilarious. The whole concept of a country who forced its teenagers halfway around the world to fight, kill and die in the paddy fields of Vietnam but they couldn't legally have a beer in a bar seems like a hundred years ago now.

"Sarge, I'm only 18. I got a ruptured spleen and I always carry a purse. I got eyes like a bat and my feet are flat and my asthma's getting worse."—"Draft Dodger Rag"

Humor wasn't his only ammunition. When he sang "I Ain't a Marchin' Anymore" in the name of pacifism, we cheered. When he sang about the

"Freedom Riders" down south who flouted Jim Crow laws and paid with their broken bones and—in the case of Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney—with their lives, we cried. When he appeared at Carnegie Hall in a gold lame Elvis suit, we laughed.

Problem was, when nobody cared anymore, when the protest movement dissolved in a sea of provocateurs and drugs, and, especially, when there was nothing to protest anymore, Ochs

went dead within, turning into a brutish drunk who you could actually see roaming around the East Village in a haze of psychotic arguments and self-flagellation.

On April 9, 1976, in Far Rockaway, his sister found him hanging.

I miss Phil Ochs. I miss his brand of confrontational politics. I miss his gorgeous tenor voice—equal to that of Garfunkel, Mathis and Nilsson—that was as beautiful and heartbreaking

as his own tragic story (why was no movie ever made?). I miss his sense of humor. We need Phil Ochs now. That's why the release of *Live In Montreal 10/22/66* (MVD) is such a boon to my savaged soul in our current clusterfuck of a presidential administration. Ochs—like Woody Guthrie before him who had a sign on his guitar that said "This Machine Kills Fascists"—kept things in balance.

"His name was Medgar Evers and he walked his road alone like Emmett Till and thousands more whose names we'll never know. They tried to burn his home and they beat him to the ground but deep down inside they both knew what it took to bring him down. Too many martyrs and too many dead. Too many lies. Too many empty words said. Too many times for too many angry men. Oh let it never be again."—"Too Many Martyrs"

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