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Stills and Collins stop in W.Va.

By DAVE LAVENDER The Herald-Dispatch

Sep 28, 2017



Photo by Anna Webber Iconic singer/songwriters Stephen Stills and Judy Collins will bring their classic songs to Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 2, as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

HUNTINGTON — At age 78, Judy Collins was taking a two-week rest from her high-profile theater tour with longtime friend — and fellow American music icon — Stephen Stills.

You can hear the youthful fervor in the voice of Collins, whom The New York Times called the “ageless wild angel of pop.”

She knows she blossoms best on stage and cannot wait to get back out to share these magic moments, and who can blame her?

“I get to be a singer and guitar player in a rock ‘n’ roll band with Stephen Stills,” Collins said with a chuckle and a bit of disbelief. “It doesn’t get much better than that.”

After hitting the road hard from late July past Labor Day, Collins has been in the midst of a break before she and touring partner and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Stills and their band dive into the second leg of the tour celebrating their 50-year history together.

Birthered during their wild Summer of Love affair immortalized in Stills’ song “Suite: Judy Blue Eyes,” their time together has matured into a savored friendship and musical kinship that has blossomed into a new album, “Everybody Knows,” being celebrated on this tour.

The theater tour kicks back off Saturday, Sept. 30, in Connecticut and rolls to the West Coast to California with two stops in West Virginia. The Marshall Artists Series presents “Stills & Collins” at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 925 4th Ave., Huntington, at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 2. Tickets are \$97.87, \$76.04 and \$54.21. For tickets, call the box office at 304-696-6656, go online at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) or stop by the Marshall Artists Series box office in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on 5th Avenue across from Marshall University’s Student Center from noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

On Wednesday, Oct. 4, Stills and Collins will be at WVU, the site where Collins was last in West Virginia for a “Mountain Stage” taping on April 17, performing songs off her Grammy-nominated “Silver Skies Blue” duets album with Ari Hest.

“We have a few days off after we did 27 of our 50 or so shows, and we have another 25 shows so I am just dying to get back on the road,” Collins said by phone. “It is a very unusual tour, I don’t think I have ever done anything quite like it. It has a special quality, and I think we have worked a show that we love doing. We come off just flying.”

That flying feeling is thanks in part to bringing to the stage some of the spark created by “Everybody Knows,” which was just released Sept. 22, and which is the first album the two icons and longtime friends have recorded together.

The album illustrates the rich history between the two legends. “Who Knows Where The Time Goes,” from Collins’ 1968 album of the same name, was the first song they ever recorded together. Stills first recorded “Judy” in a demo session immediately following her “Who Knows Where The Time Goes” session, in the very same studio. This demo tape was lost for years and later issued as the “Just Roll Tape” album. “So Begins The Task” is another Stills original that also appears on that demo. The song was later recorded for Stills’ Manassas debut, and for “CSN 2012.” Collins recorded “So Begins The Task” as well for 1973’s “True Stories and Other Dreams.” She wrote “Houses” about her relationship with Stills, a standout track from her landmark release, 1975’s platinum-selling “Judith.”

The new album also features duets of classic songs such as Bob Dylan’s “Girl From The North Country.” Collins, known for her early interpretations of Leonard Cohen’s work, selected “Everybody Knows” for this album — her first time recording it.

Stills and Collins sing over a soaring version of the Traveling Wilburys' "Handle With Care." The song "Questions" was written by Stills and recorded for Buffalo Springfield's "Last Time Around," and later revisited on the second section of "Carry On," from Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's "Deja Vu." And Collins penned a brand new song, "River Of Gold," for the album.

The touring band features renowned bassist Zev Katz, who has played with everyone from Elton John to Bruno Mars and Aretha Franklin.

Stills and Collins start the concert singing The Traveling Wilburys' classic "Handle With Care," with Collins cheerfully getting to sing the parts of the late pop warbler, Roy Orbison.

They close the concert with "Suite Judy Blue Eyes," and in between weave their tapestry of his songs, her songs and the songs of their heroes and friends.

A life-long activist, Collins said the show offers encouragement and joy in what is, and what has perhaps always been troubling times since the duo started their careers during the height of the Vietnam War, during race riots, the upheaval of the women's movement, and the environmental and social justice movements as a new generation clashed with the establishment over remolding America.

"Like it was when we started, politics seem worse then terrible, and the racism still today is horrible, and we are in a bad place right now. But when we are out performing we see a lot of encouragement, and first of all it is seen in a lot of people of all ages coming to see us," Collins said. "I think we are iconic from that time, and some of our songs are part of the fabric of American music — certainly 'Who Knows Where

the Time Goes' and 'For What it is Worth' and 'Both Sides Now' and Leonard Cohen's 'Suzanne,' and 'Suite Judy Blue Eyes.' But I think that we are offering political and social and musical ideas that are still relevant. There is nothing old about this music; it is present and current, and this is a new way of offering it, and it is fun and inspiring to get to be a singer and guitar player in a rock 'n' roll band with Stephen Stills. It doesn't get much better than that."

On both the new record and in concert, one of the most poignant moments for Collins is getting to sing and share the brilliant lyrics of "Everybody Knows" from her longtime friend Leonard Cohen. She first cut his songs back in 1966, and the two were friends until the end. He died Nov. 7, 2016.

Collins said she could not think of a more important song to put on the album than his "Everybody Knows."

"He died on Nov. 7 before anyone knew how the election would turn out. I was, of course, devastated like so many people, and I thought immediately, 'Well, it is time for me to sing "Everybody Knows,"'" Collins said. "About a week after that I was singing it in concert, and the audience felt the same way I did, and I felt like it was a song that came about at this time when we really needed it. I made a little recording of it and sent it to Stephen and asked him what he thought about singing it, and he said he loved it and that it had to be on the record. It really strikes a note for all of us."

Collins who paid tribute to her longtime friend Cohen with the 2004 album "Judy Collins Sings Leonard Cohen: Democracy," said it is important to celebrate and remember such a great, dear friend, whom she feels was one of the greatest lyricists in modern music.

“He called me from time to time and would read me lyrics. He always had a whole bunch of lyrics, and he would reel them off. For ‘Everybody Knows,’ there would be like 60 verses, and then he would say, ‘Now I have to choose which ones,’” Collins said. “I think he chose well, and I am so indebted to him for all of those songs, and every chance I am able to I sing his songs and savor knowing him as a friend. He was a very generous man and very giving and just a great friend. It is a terrible loss not to have writers in our lives, but we do have his music and that is very special.”

Collins, who released new albums in 2015, 2016 and 2017, said she knows how special it is to be able to have this moment in time to celebrate with Stills.

“It is very unique, and we have fortunately remained friends for all of these years,” Collins said. “We have gone through the unpleasantness early on and then settled into a friendly scenario when we would see each other, and there has always been a lot to share. In the past 10 years we have been seeing each other on a more regular basis, and we hang out with each other’s families. I am crazy about his wife, and my husband is that way about Stephen, and with every year we know truly it is a miracle that either one of us are still alive.”



If You Go

WHAT: Presented by St. Mary's Medical Center and HIMG, iconic singer/songwriters Stephen Stills and Judy Collins.

In 1967, Stills met Collins and began a two-year romance that inspired him to write the 1969 Crosby, Stills & Nash classic "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes." Now, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of their relationship, Stills and Collins have teamed up for a collaborative album, "Everybody Knows," as well as a U.S. tour.

WHO IS THE OPENER: Based out of Oslo, Norway, Kreg Viesselman is a Minnesota native who burst onto the scene in 1998 with a blues-soaked voice heard on his first record, "Live at the Cellar Door." In 2000 he released, "Many Rivers," that won over such fans as legendary blues man Taj Mahal. Viesselman's self-titled 2003 indie release won acclaim and helped him share the stage with such acts as with Mahal, Tom Rush, Geoff Muldaur and Ellis Paul. After his 2006 critically acclaimed album "The Pull," Viesselman retreated from touring and recording for four years, relocating permanently in Europe. His latest record, "If You Lose Your Light" was released by Columbia/Sony Norway.

WHERE: Keith-Albee
Performing Arts Center, 925
4th Ave., Huntington.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Monday,
Oct. 2.

GET TIX: Tickets are \$97.87,
\$76.04 and \$54.21. Tickets
may be ordered by calling the
box office at 304-696-6656,
online at Ticketmaster.com or
at the Marshall Artists Series
box office in the Joan C.
Edwards Playhouse on 5th
Avenue across from Marshall
University's Student Center
from noon to 5 p.m. Monday
through Friday.

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