

V NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

Catching up with Buffalo Springfield & Poco Guitarist Richie Furay

Richie Furay was an original member of the 60s band Buffalo Springfield. One of their signature songs, "For What It's Worth," certainly resonates today as much as it did during the counter culture era. During the early 70s, Richie formed a band called Poco. As one listens to "A Good Feelin' to Know," we hear their country rock sound and wish for more.

"I liked the Rockabilly sound when I was growing up. I would listen to Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran and Buddy Holly. If I had to pick a specific music influence, it would be Rockabilly and I believe that sound came out in my music," said Richie. "I asked my parents for a guitar when I was eight years old. What really got me going back then was watching the TV show, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet. I remember distinctly watching an episode where Ricky

Nelson is singing Be Bop Baby in a high school auditorium. It was during that moment when I thought, if this guy can do it then I am going to do it, too. So that was the start of how I got going."

Originally from Yellow Springs, Ohio, near Dayton, Richie shares how he ended up in the midst of the folk music scene in Greenwich Village, New York. "After high school, I went to Otterbein College in Westerville. I joined the Acapella Choir. During my sophomore year, I suffered a ruptured appendix. I had to drop out of school around the holidays. I knew there was going to be a school trip in the spring to New York City and I did my best to work my way into going. The staff agreed that I could go on the trip if I participated in the rehearsals. We had a little folk group at the time. When we got to New York, we went directly to The Village and actually sang in a couple of clubs such as Café Wha? and The Four Winds. The thing about these clubs was that they already had set entertainment booked. We were the ones who sang during set changes" (laughs). "Over the summer, we went back to New York and it was during that time that I met Stephen Stills, who happened to be playing at The Four Winds."

There was a certain pathway that lead Richie from New York to Los Angeles but it took a couple of tries before it came together. "There was a guy in New York named Eddie Miller. He put together a group of nine individuals, kind of like The New Christy Minstrels. We were together for about six months before we broke up. Stephen took part of the band and became their lead singer because he wanted to go to California. During that time, the group did a short tour of Canada. Shortly after that,



the group broke up. I wasn't doing anything specific so I started working at an aircraft company in Connecticut because I had family in the area. While I was working at the company, a friend who I knew while I was in New York brought me an album by The Byrds. My friend was Gram Parsons (The Flying Burrito Brothers). He told me I had to listen to this album. Once I heard the album, I knew I had to get out of there and find Stephen. It took a while but once I finally connected with Stephen, he was living in California. He told me to come out to LA because he was putting a band together and they needed another lead singer. So, I quit my job, hopped on an airplane and met up with Stephen and that's how we started Buffalo Springfield."

It would be what some may consider the planets lining up to connect with Neil Young. "Stephen first met Neil in Canada. I first met him in New York. Neil came to California looking for Stephen and I. He never found us and of course those were the days without cell phones or the internet. As luck would have it, on the day Neil was going to leave LA and head out to San Francisco, he was driving his 1953 green Pontiac hearse! He was on Sunset Boulevard. It just so happened at the same time, Stephen and I were on Sunset going in the opposite direction. Traffic came to a standstill, as it often does on the Strip, when we noticed a familiar looking hearse with Ontario, Canada license plates. That is how we got together. It just happened. You can't plan that stuff."

Eventually, Neil Young would come and go from the band. There were band member changes for one reason or another and Richie stayed with the band as long as Stephen remained. "Jim Messina and I talked about forming our own band while still in Buffalo Springfield. Stephen was the heart and soul of that band so when he decided to leave the group that's when Jim and I formed Poco."

Richie was a member of Poco for four years before leaving. "My heart was broken to be honest. Poco had just released "A Good Feeling to Know". I felt really good about it. This was the single that would push us forward. At the time, AM radio was big. We were getting air time on FM and our shows were well attended but we just couldn't crack the AM stations. Well, at the same time we released, "A Good Feeling to Know", The Eagles released, "Take It Easy" and when that song took off, I don't think our song even charted. I remember

calling David Geffen to let him know that I didn't think this was going to work any longer. I had the drive and the energy but it just wasn't happening. Shortly after I spoke with David, I was with another band for about a year." (the Souther-Hillman-Furay Band)

For thirty-five years, Richie has been a pastor. "When I was in Souther-Hillman-Furay, Al Perkins (guitarist) took me to a church in California called Calvary Chapel. I made a lot of friends who were pastors. The Jesus Movement was going on and I came in right on the tail end. I didn't see myself joining another band or group. That's when I became a believer. During this time, my wife Nancy and I had been married for seven years and were separated for seven months. So, I prayed for direction and guidance. I started a Bible study at my house, Nancy and I got back together, and I remained a pastor for thirty-five years. I retired from the pulpit ministry at the end of 2017."

Richie has many current projects going on simultaneously, one of them being a documentary about his life. "My manager (David Stone) and I were discussing putting a documentary together. We were trying to think of someone who could be the narrator or at least narrate the trailer. As luck would have it, I received a note from film director Cameron Crowe on social media. He was popping in to say hello. I was skeptical at first because I thought it was someone playing a joke. I sent a private note that said if this was really him that I was going to be in Los Angeles for a show and would like for him to attend. He responded that it was really him and he planned on attending. Sure enough, he did and I have pictures to prove it! He agreed to narrate the trailer." What many may not realize is that at the age of fifteen, Cameron Crowe was writing articles for Rolling Stone magazine. One of his first assignments was interviewing Richie and profiling the band, Poco. They first met in 1973. "I had not seen Cameron in at least forty years. I am happy he did the narrative for the documentary trailer. It would be great if he could narrate the entire documentary."

Before the pandemic shut down social and entertainment events, Richie had planned a farewell tour. "The dates keep getting pushed back. I'm not sure it will happen. We will have to see how our country responds."

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