

music

► M&G critics recommend

Doo-wop with conscience

Cape Town

Suzy Bell
National Tour

Word on the street in New York last week: "Aw, man, **Richie Valens**'s going to Africa! That makes him the first original African American singer/songwriter to go to SA — and at the same time as Michael Jackson. But Richie, man, he's a real AWI."

Yep, an Artist With Integrity (AWI). That he sure is, with a cult following. Famous for his near three-hour opening performance at Woodstock and his on the spot composition of what became his most well-known song, *Freedom*. It was quite a leap from singing doo-wop on Brooklyn street corners.

Somewhat of an acoustic troubadour working all year round — only in the last three years cutting down to a four or five day week — is surely a schedule that would slaughter most of our younger primadonna musos. Speaking from his studio in New Jersey, the gentle voiced Havens is adamant he's not in "show business". He prefers to call it the "communications business". He says it's "wonderful" Jackson will be out here at the same time as "he also has a message within his being, and is part of the creation of that generation that I came from. He also wants the world to be a better place."

Havens laughs a lot and attributes his light-hearted manner to being very much "in touch

with the universe". I guess it's kinda what you'd expect from someone who cruised into the consciously hip and happening Greenwich Village in the super Sixties. The lucky sod mingled with intellectual beat bohemians like Kerouac, Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg. "Gigging seven years in the Village, seven days a week, it was incredible. My university." From 1958, "Dylan came five years later", Havens was greatly influenced by a large group of traditional folk singers "There was also an interesting variety of traditional music from the black blues, the work songs, the chain gang songs and the cattle driving songs ... it was an incredible awakening for me."

But even as a young boy Havens thought it the coolest thing just living on this planet: "just looking up at the sky and looking out into space. As kids we got to see ourselves from very far away, and as a generation, that was the change of consciousness between us and our parents and grand-parents." Which is probably why Havens, at 56, can rage about raves being "essentially a form of celebration. I think techno music is the legacy of the 1960's. Period!" And he is highly tolerant of today's music: "The value of the songs today are written for the people of their particular age groups. It's what they are saying and talking about on a far more conceptual level that is interesting. In the 1960's we were just learning to conceptualise our language, and as a generation we didn't have to say much, we understood each other. But now we're back around to that circle again. So I look at it as, what



Woodstock icon Richie Havens will be touring South Africa

part of their world are they tryna show me?."

When Havens is not gigging, he's either sculpting "I do every medium I can get my hands on" or drawing, or playing computer games or working on computer graphics. I don't get enough time to play all the games, but I'll take a Game Boy on the aeroplane with me."

The Havens tour promoters are also, incidentally, negotiating with other Sixties legends like Taj Mahal, James Taylor, Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen, so expect more of the same soon.

Richie Havens performs tonight in Cape Town at the Nico; at Jo'burg's Civic on October 8 and 9 and in Durban at 8pm on October 10.

3 Arts Theatre, Plumstead. Oktoberfest with the Charlie Griffin Band, October 1 to 4 and 8 to 11.

Bayfront Blue, V & A Waterfront. Spoke-shave jazz trio plays bossa nova, blues and jazz, Fridays 8pm to 11pm. Ph: 419-9068.

Blue Plate Restaurant, Kloof St. Jack Van Poll Trio, Mondays 7.30pm to 11pm. Entrance is R10. Ph: 24-1515.

Cranzgots, Hout Bay. Friday October 3: Derek Gripper, Gilgamesh's classical guitarist. Saturday: Joyful Crye and Karoo. Ph: 790-3160.

De Hoek Resort, Oudshoorn. Martell Woodstock Festival with Valiant Swart, The Led, Koos Kombuis, White Trash and many more from October 3 to 5. Ph: (0441) 850-1163

Green Dolphin Restaurant, V&A Waterfront. Friday October 3 to Sunday October 5: The Dave Ledbetter Trio. Monday to Sunday: The Gavin Minter Quartet with Bobby Minter on vocals. Ph: 21-7471.

► **Harbour Theatre**, Kalk Bay. Christine Weir and Max Mikula, October 8 to 19. Wednesdays to Sundays, 9pm. Ph: 788-2943.

The Hidden Cellar, Stellenbosch. Friday October 3: Tundra.

On Broadway, Green Point. *What a Feeling.... The Ultimate 80's Show* featuring classic songs from 1980 to 1989. Ends October 4. Ph: 418-8338.

River Club, Observatory. Saturday, October 4: Battle of the bands including Tundra. Take Four Bistro, Longkloof Studios. Friday, October 3 at 9pm: Pickle, with DJs Adam, Ralph and guests. Saturday: Rise Up!

Durban

► **Angelo's**, 39 West Street. Heaven for bhangra babes. A Latin American band. The

The iron ghetto blaster

is anybody's guess