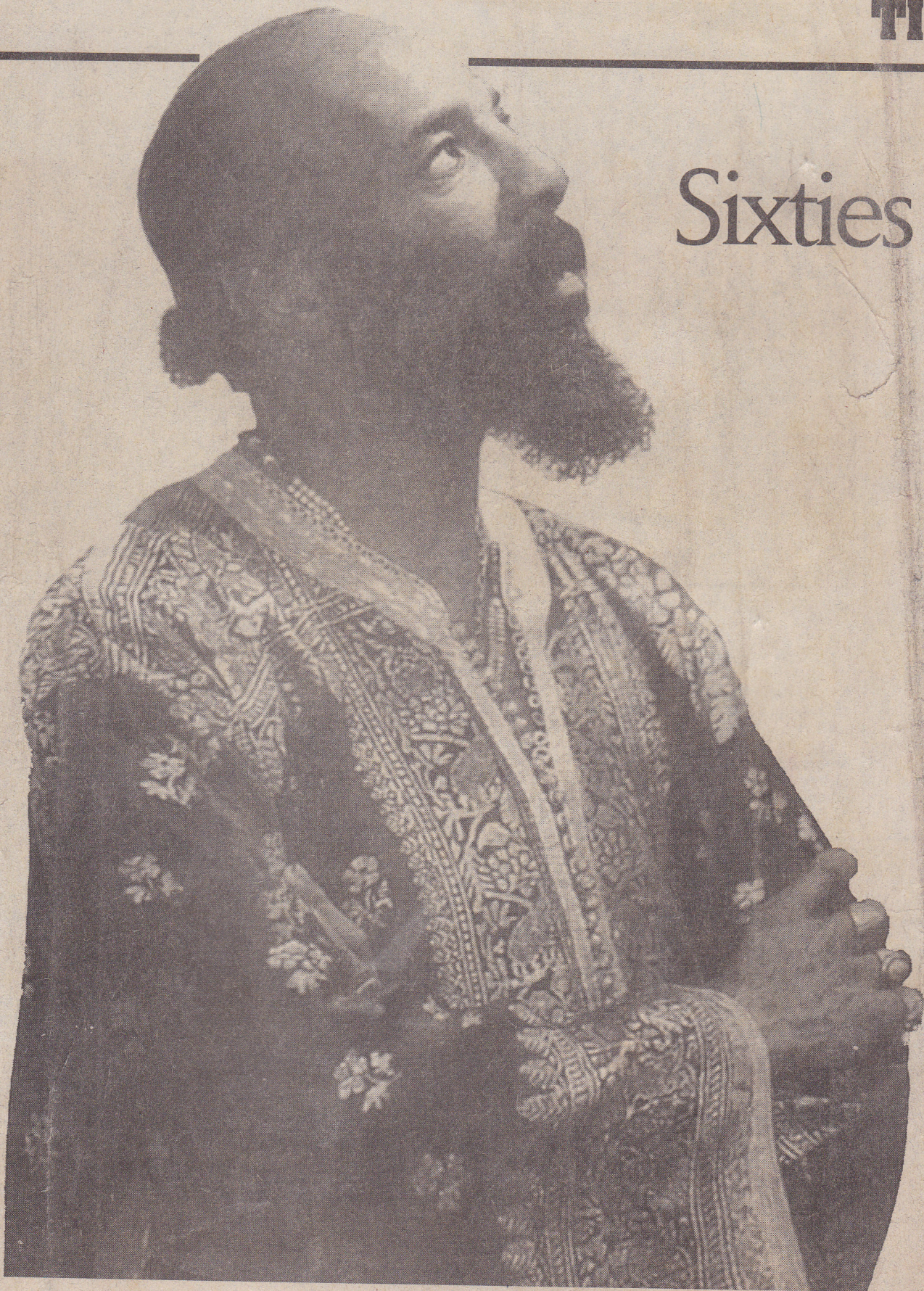


# Sixties su



HERE COMES THE SON: Richie Havens, the legendary folk guitarist who opened the Woodstock Festival in 1969, is to strum his stuff on a South African tour which kicks off in Cape Town

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FOLK TRAIL

# Survivor still spreading word

A TRAFFIC jam is hardly the stuff of urban legend — but Richie Havens got his big break in 1969 when the opening acts became stuck in the crowds on the road to the biggest rock festival of the decade.

The folk singer who had been playing to intimate audiences in the coffee shops of Greenwich Village, Manhattan, suddenly found himself on stage entertaining half a million fans until the opening bands arrived — three hours late.

The rest is history. Almost 30 years later, Richie Havens is still singing *Freedom*, the spiritual anthem he improvised as an encore and which captured the hearts of the Woodstock crowd.

He laughs about it now: "I've had to play that song every night since. It's preceded me to many places around the world. The only time I didn't play it, the audience let me know all about it. It's not my song — it belongs to all of us."

He's not talking only about his generation, he says — the search for freedom is an important task for "every generation that has to find its voice".

The folk singer, staunch environmentalist and social activist has come a long way from the mean streets of Brooklyn.

These days, he devotes most of his time to working with children in the suburbs and the ghettos — "the next generation".

As he speaks during an exclusive interview from his home in Greenwich Village, the

**My favourite places:** So many places I've been to are wonderful. I relate to everywhere I go as a work in progress. I'm glad I do one-nighters, otherwise I wouldn't want to leave.

**My favourite things:** All kinds of tools — I sculpt, paint, draw. My computers, all the tools for communications.

**My least favourite things:** Hmm, there's a bit of good in most things. Nope, I haven't even had a bad concert where I didn't connect with the audience.

**My worst quality:** It used to be intolerance, but I got over that. You can't push it or pull it — it will move when it's ready.

**My best quality:** Understanding

deep, soulful voice and infectious laugh are instantly recognisable from his famous moment on celluloid in the *Woodstock* movie.

"What I hear now is a desperate cry in a much different world. To be taken seriously, to be heard, there's the rub. We were labelled the civil rights generation, a rock 'n roll generation. Today's children are the only generation who know for sure they live on a planet in space with limited resources. They have a brand-

new consciousness about all of the things we're losing touch with. They're the environmental generation who want to be heard."

Havens says this is the message he will be preaching on his tour, which opens in Cape Town this week. He will also pass on simple chords to 40 local guitarists at one of the musical workshops he is to give in Khayelitsha.

He is to play with two other survivors of the 60s — guitarist Paul Williams, who appeared

"Don't forget you're on a platform three foot off the stage." When I finished playing I fell right off — next thing I know, I'm flat on my back looking up at the ceiling. The weird thing is the spotlight blew out at the same time. The audience freaked, "Oh my God, he's disappeared." I waved my guitar to let them know "Hey, I'm OK."

**The meaning of life:** Communicating with people, playing songs that do something for me and for them.

**I'd most like to be reincarnated as:** That's a hard one. As a kid I always wanted to be a giant, puffy, white cloud in the sky, floating slowly.

SECRET FILE

RICHIE HAVENS/singer

**My favourite people:** Anyone who crosses the line is a hero of mine. I was inspired by Nina Simone — I grew up in the 50s listening to her music. Also songwriters like Freddie Neil, Dino Valentino.

**My least favourite people:** Politicians, people who keep their community from growing, stop things from moving ahead.

**My most embarrassing moment:** One night I played in a wonderful auditorium on a platform on a big stage. A roadie warned me:

**WIN FREE TICKETS!**

FIVE lucky Cape Metro readers will win double tickets to see Richie Havens at the Nico Theatre on October 4. Each winner will also be handed, by the singer, an autographed CD. To enter, all you have to do is call 083-900-3310 and answer the question:

*What is the title of the song Havens improvised at Woodstock and which made him famous?*

with Havens at Woodstock, and conga player Emile Latimer.

Other than saying his South African concerts will be unplugged, Havens is keeping his repertoire a secret. "One thing Woodstock taught me was to know the first and last songs you're going to play — how to get on and off the stage."

When Havens set out, he held his guitar flat on his lap and played in open tuning. Since learning to play it upright, he has performed at the Royal Albert Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Monterey and Isle of Wight festivals and Bob Dylan's 30th anniversary concert in 1993. He has also played for the Dalai Lama and at Bill Clinton's presidential inauguration.

He's come a long way to reach Cape Town and the Nico Theatre.