

Al Stewart — Still Working At 78

On September 5, Al Stewart will turn 78. Although he has recorded hardly any new songs for more than a decade, he has an impressive catalogue going back to the 1960s. Many are timeless, which is what one would expect from the inventor of [historical folk-rock](#), but others will strike a personal chord with the listener for other reasons. Great songs often have this tendency. Paul McCartney's [Yesterday](#) is well over half a century old, but many men will identify with it, and so will many women if you flip the gender. Joni Mitchell's [Both Sides Now](#) is a song of regret with which many older people will identify. Al Stewart has more than a few songs like this, many of his early songs are intensely personal, but emotion is a universal thing.



He will be taking his birthday off but on September 8, 9 & 10 he will be playing venues in Wisconsin with his much younger band The Empty Pockets.

If *Year Of The Cat* is a certain show closer or encore, when I saw him in London [last year](#) he opened with *Sirens Of Titan*, a track from his *Modern Times* album based on a Kurt Vonnegut novel. He may also perform what

appear to be his two most recent songs; *Primo Carnera* and *Prester John* have yet to find their way onto an album, and a new album is long overdue.

The Empty Pockets are a force of their own, scoring a *Billboard* number 1 last year, they currently have a new album out. And they are true Al fans; when I buttonholed the lovely Erika she knew all about [Elvaston Place](#) and Al's association with Yoko Ono.

You can check out Al on his [official website](#) and The Empty Pockets on [theirs](#) as well as many live recordings on YouTube. For Al, if you are into epic songs, he has written a few of those, most recently the autobiographical *Class Of '58*; the autobiographical and intensely personal [Love Chronicles](#), whose solitary use of a certain F word was controversial at the time but half a century and more down the line, no one bats an eyelid at it. His two most demanded epic songs are *Roads To Moscow* and *Nostradamus*, both from *Past, Present And Future*. As for The Empty Pockets, *That Gun* has a certain novelty while *Privatize The Profits*, a composition by lead guitarist Josh Solomon is sadly thematic in this era of manufactured austerity.

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