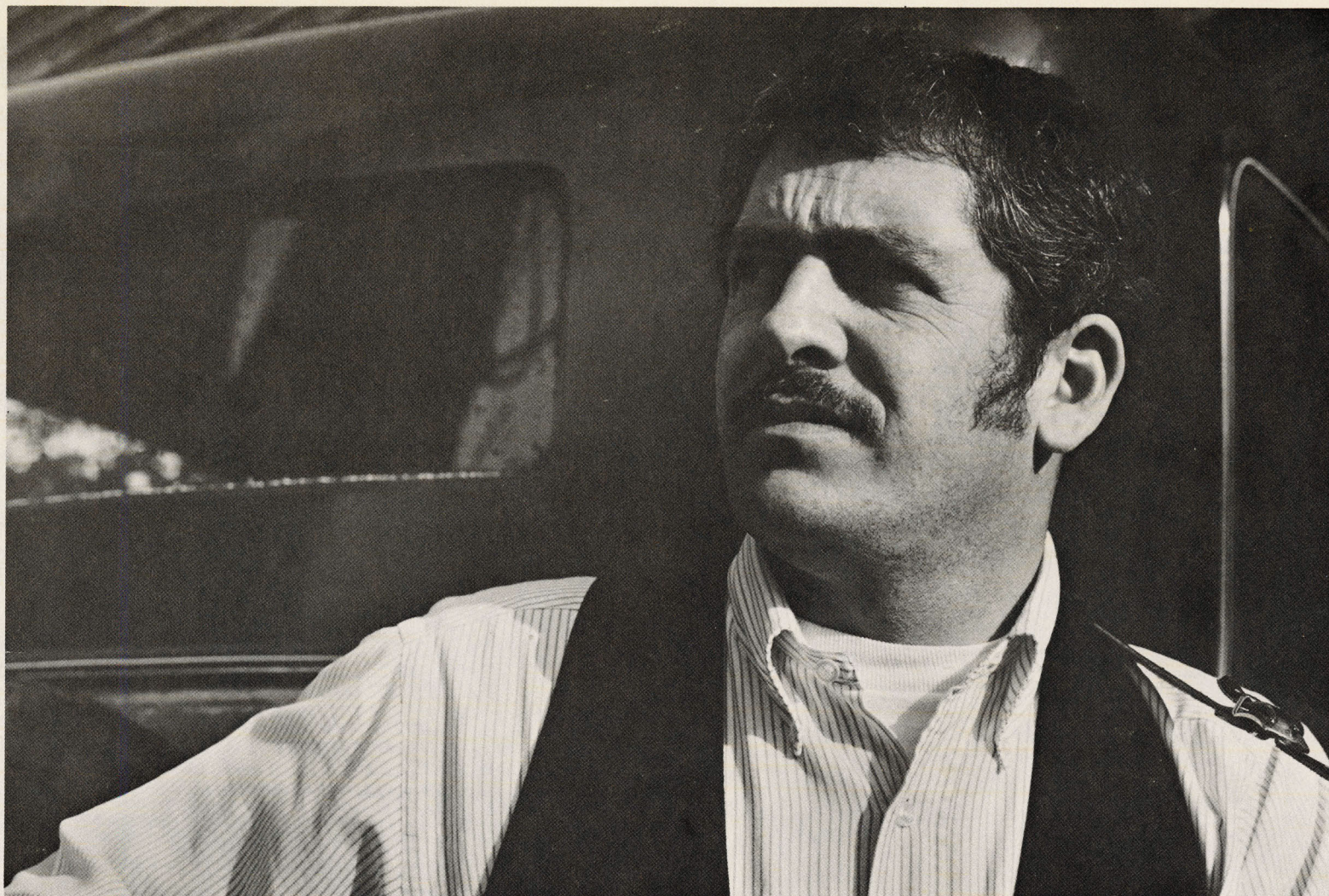


**MIKE
RUSSO**

ARHOLLE 4003
STEREO





MIKE RUSSO

Mike Russo plays guitar and piano, and sings, and it may be that hearing this record will produce all the information necessary to enjoy his music. For Mike is a traditional entertainer. He is able to generate—in the spirit and space of a few tunes—enough real response to effectively obviate the need for musicologists, biographers, and critics.

The usual reaction of an audience to Mike Russo is simply that his music makes one glad to be alive.

The format of an album, however, gives itself well to idle print—suggesting long poems or intensely intrepid inspections of what the artist is getting at. In Mike's case, that is simple enough—he says he enjoys playing real music for real people, and that is his life (or craft, or art).

In fairness, however, to fine print, this is a first album, and there are a few things to be found out.

Mike Russo is 32 years old. He lives with his wife in Portland, Oregon, in an old home

on the banks of the Willamette river. He is a sign painter by trade, and has been a working man all his life. This, he says, keeps his music free.

Mike was born in Connecticut, and lived there as a boy on a farm that had no lights or running water. His uncle and grandfather played guitar and mandolin, and Mike took up string music when he was eight years old.

At 11, he came to Oregon with his family. By 17, he was seriously involved with music, and left high school to have more time to play guitar. Before long, he was married, with a child, and working as an auto mechanic. He was playing 12 string, and playing blues.

Between those days, and these, the influences that shaped Mike's music were many. They can be glimpsed, surfacing like old tunes at the end of a long set—hard times and good. At 23, Mike was divorced and drafted, sent to paint signs for the Army in Virginia. But it was there he really learned the piano, blues and barrelhouse, and traveled through the east, and up to New York, picking up on music, and people, and bringing it back home.

Home was Portland, and in those early years Mike played what must have been hundreds of concerts at a place called the 13th Avenue Gallery, a kind of moveable, musical landmark kept going by an old friend, Paul Hebb. Most of those early concerts were done with Ron Brentano, a banjo player, and they were memorable.

By now, people just passing through began to stop at Mike's place to play a few tunes—people like Fred McDowell, Lightning Hopkins, Brownie McGee, Sonny Terry and many others.

Mike has touched many different people, places, ideas and ways of living and playing, and they have helped to develop the extremely broad base of his style. They are the reasons for his exceptional versatility as a technician, and for the wide-ranging spirit of his music.

In 15 years time, Mike has developed a highly personal way that in a sense synthesizes nearly every area of American music—blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, country and western, bluegrass, rock and roll, traditional guitar tunes, ballads—Mike has been around them all, and kept a lot of what he liked, and kept it honest.

His style, particularly on 6 string guitar, is unmistakably his own, but difficult to define. Mike is a true virtuoso, whose skills are so substantial that even the most elaborate runs seem without excess, or strain. His piano can be booming barrelhouse, or lyric nostalgia. He moves easily through the widest ranges of material, always projecting a strongly felt sense of pure delight and joy in his music, and a genuine concern to share it with whomever is within range.

Mike Russo, quite simply, lives to make music. The heaviest message in his work is the invitation to participate in the life of it.

(Wes Taft)

FLAT TOP FLING
BLUES FOR FRED
THE GALLIS POLE
DE KALB BLUES
DELIA'S FLING (*)
RED CROSS STORE BLUES (*)
BUCK DANCER'S CHOICE (*)

IT MUST BE THE END OF TIME
NIGHTS OF GLADNESS
BLUES RUN IN MY FAMILY
6TH AVENUE STOMP
STACK O'LEE
I FEEL SO GOOD

Mike Russo vocals and guitar on
side 1, vocals and piano on
side 2
John Kahn bass on side 2

All recordings, (except (*)) were made on
August 21st, 1969 in Berkeley, Calif.
at Sierra Sound Studios. Bob DeSousa
—engineer

Selections marked (*) were recorded by
John Ullman for the Seattle Folklore
Society—424 35th Avenue, Seattle,
Wash. 98122

Cover: Wayne Pope

Cover Photo: Wes Taft

Producer: Chris Strachwitz

Mike has been playing recently at colleges and universities throughout the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia. He has played a number of concerts for the Seattle Folklore Society, including appearances with Lightning Hopkins and Fred McDowell. He and Ron Brentano did the music for the award winning Bonneville Power Administration film, "Intertie", following in the footsteps of Woody Guthrie, who wrote music for BPA in the forties. Mike can also be heard accompanying Fred McDowell on Arhoolie LP No. 1046: Fred McDowell & His Blues Boys.

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