

A.J. CROCE

BIOGRAPHY

After 50 years and more than 50 million records sold, Jim Croce's legacy as an iconic singer/songwriter is firmly cemented. A.J. Croce, a *Billboard* charting singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and performer, returns this fall, bringing Jim's classic songs to the stage with his "Croce Plays Croce 50th Anniversary Tour." After 10 studio albums and 30 years of touring the world establishing his own career, in the early 2000's, A.J. taught himself guitar and several of his father's (Jim's) classics. The fan response from dropping in a song or two like "Operator" in his own show was astounding and deeply emotional. He then debuted a concert that celebrated the legacy of his father's songs, stories and music; as well as his own. The show featured two generations of Croce music and many songs by other artists which connect father and son as performers. Throughout the past seven years, A.J.'s "Croce Plays Croce" tour has sold out performing arts centers across America. In 2022, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Jim's breakthrough album, *You Don't Mess Around With Jim*, A.J. honored the memory of his father with a fall tour featuring a seven piece ensemble and a multimedia production.

A.J. is hitting the road again this year in celebration of two of Jim Croce's legendary albums, 1973's *Life and Times*, and his final release, *I Got A Name*; in addition to songs from *You Don't Mess Around With Jim*. The much-anticipated fall performances, "Croce Plays Croce 50th Anniversary Tour," commences on October 27, coinciding with the October 13 release of *The Definitive Croce* collection, and includes performances at historic venues like New York City's Town Hall and Detroit's Royal Oak Music Theatre. The tour will continue over the next year from coast to coast. The "Croce Plays Croce 50th Anniversary" show features a legendary band including drummer Gary Mallaber (Van Morrison/Steve Miller Band), bassist/singer David Barard (Dr. John), and guitarist/violinist James Pennebaker (Delbert McClinton); accompanied by background singers Jackie Wilson and Katrice Donaldson. The shows will also feature a moving multi-media presentation and will include all of Jim's chart-topping hits, as well as many deep cuts.

Over the past three decades, A.J. Croce has established his reputation as a piano player and vocal stylist who pulls from a host of musical traditions and anti-heroes — part New Orleans, part juke joint, part soul. From his 10 studio albums, it's clear that he holds an abiding love for all types of musical genres: Blues, Soul, Pop, Jazz, and Rock n' Roll. A virtuosic piano player, Croce toured with B.B. King and Ray Charles before reaching the age of 21, and over his career, he has performed with a wide range of musicians, from Willie Nelson to the Neville Brothers, to Béla Fleck and Ry Cooder. A.J. has also co-written songs with such formidable tunesmiths as Leon Russell, Dan Penn, Robert Earl Keen, and multi-Grammy winner Gary Nicholson. His albums have all charted on an impressive array of charts: Top 40, Blues, Americana, Jazz, College, and Radio 1. The Nashville-based singer/songwriter has landed 22 singles on a variety of Top 20 charts. His songwriting and style has evolved from Jazz & Blues on his debut and sophomore albums, to the roots-rock of the more recent collaborative recordings like *Cantos* with Ben Harper, *Twelve Tales* with Allen Toussaint, and *Just Like Medicine* with Vince Gill.

After many years of resisting numerous offers to perform Jim's music, A.J. began mixing a few of Jim's songs into his regular tour performances. The key to making it work was not simply covering the songs, but bringing his own style and flair to them, infusing a fresh, spontaneous excitement. Last year, he released his latest single, "So Much Fun," and the national television show, *CBS Sunday Morning*, featured a well-told story of A.J. and his father on Father's Day.

On the first "Croce plays Croce" tour, A.J. discovered a fascinating phenomenon. "People often come in thinking the show will be a quiet, nostalgic, precious display of my father's songs – but it's not precious at all. We give them a really energetic, live show. The audience expects one thing, but by the time they leave, they realize they got something completely different -- and they leave not only with a new perspective on Jim, but as fans of mine as well."

The two Jim Croce albums that turn 50 in 2023 are *Life and Times*, originally released in January of 1973, delivering Billboard's Hot 100 #1 single, "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown," and *I Got A Name*, his final studio album with the title song being released a week after his tragic plane crash on September 20, 1973. The album also featured the smash hit ballad, "I'll Have to Say I Love You In A Song," and "Workin' At The Car Wash Blues." By December of 1973, both albums charted on *Billboard* at #1 and #2 on the album chart (a feat not repeated by an artist until the late 80s with Guns N' Roses). All three Jim Croce albums are being released this fall by BMG as a box set titled the aforementioned *The Definitive Croce*, as well as individually in a 50th Anniversary special edition vinyl, CD and Dolby Atmos format. The 50th Anniversary show will include songs from *You Don't Mess Around With Jim*, which spent 93 weeks on the charts. Jim's records continue to be incorporated into pop culture with unique film and television placements in Quentin Tarantino's "Django Unchained," "Stranger Things," an Apple Siri commercial, "Fast and Furious"; and with "Time in a Bottle," in "X-Men: Days of Future Past."

The "Croce Plays Croce" shows have renewed interest in Jim Croce and garnered praise for A.J: "I think they come as a Jim Croce fan but leave as fans of mine. That's something that has also made this whole experience really amazing."

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