

It's Burt's World— We Just Live in It

Rattle off just a few of his hits—"Walk on By," "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," "Alfie," "I Say a Little Prayer"—and you'll understand why Burt Bacharach is considered one of the greatest songwriters of all time. At 85, this Grammy- and Oscar-winning composer keeps the creative fires burning, writing books (his memoir, *Anyone Who Had a Heart*, came out last year), launching a tour and working on new musicals. In 2012, he received the prestigious Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, an award shared with his longtime lyricist, Hal David.

I recently had the privilege of interviewing the soft-spoken Bacharach, who will conduct, play piano and occasionally sing when he brings his 10-piece band and three singers to Cache Creek on Jan. 25. Here's what he shared.—CATHY CASSINOS-CARR

After all these years, why are you still touring?

Performing live is a great way to connect with people who care about your music and to play songs that have made an imprint on their lives.

It's a very gratifying thing when you can make people feel something with music.

"Learn the rules, and you can break them later on."

When writing songs, do you prefer to start with the music or the lyrics?

Either way. Some songs, like "Alfie" (written with David), are totally lyric-driven, so the lyrics had to come first. Of all my songs, that one is around the top of my list. It's a very meaningful song and lyric.

Any advice for aspiring songwriters?

Study. Learn how to write music on a piece of music paper instead of just singing it into a microphone. Learn the rules, and you can break them later on.

Looking back on your extraordinary life, what are some of the biggest lessons you've learned?

I think there's a certain point in life when you learn to not hang out with people who are toxic. Use your time valuably, be with people you care to be with—not somebody you think you *should* be with. Another thing is to hang out with your kids. (Bacharach has three.) It's vital. No matter how long I live, they're not going to be 17 or 20 again. Hang out with them, 'cause you're not gonna get that chance again.

