

“Authentic” Alpert at Bremerton's Admiral Theatre

Michael C. Moore, Kitsap Sun USA TODAY NETWORK Published 12:03 p.m. PT Sept. 24, 2018



There was a time when Herb Alpert thought he wasn't interested in going back out on the road. He thought the audiences he would be playing to would only want to hear his Tijuana Brass and solo hits from four or five decades ago.

Wrong. And wrong.

"There was a 40th-birthday thing for Sergio (Mendes), and they asked us to do a couple of songs with him," Alpert said of himself and his wife, Lani Hall who was one of two lead vocalists for Mendes' band Brasil '66 during their heydays. "It was a big success, and the drummer that night, Michael Shapiro, said we should do some

concerts together.

"I thought, ~I'm not gonna do that," Alpert laughed. "People will just want to hear the Tijuana Brass."

But Alpert has never been one to say never. A band came together, and the shows went over a treat.



Herb Alpert and Lani Hall have been married for 45 years. (Photo: Contributed image)

"Our first concert, in San Diego, I didn't play one TJB song," he said, "and people loved it. I was taken aback."

Alpert was speaking by phone from the Southern California home he shares with Hall, his wife since 1973, as preparations were under way for a western U.S. tour that brings him, Hall and their band to the Admiral Theatre for a sold-out Oct. 6 concert.

"We love doing it. We get energy from it," Alpert said of performing live with Hall and a trio of "friends who just happen to be giant musicians.

"We have drums, bass and keyboards. That's it," Alpert said. "It's very improvisational, different every night. It's very free. It's authentic."

The set includes a medley of TJB material and a retrospective of Brasil '66 songs. But don't expect rote readings of "Tijuana Taxi" and "The Lonely Bull," either. Alpert said he's kept his outlook on the music fresh by finding new facets of it and bringing them out.

That's the fuel for his latest release, "Music Vol. 3: Herb Alpert Reimagines the Tijuana Brass," due out Oct. 19. On it, he's taken a dozen songs that got the original TJB treatment back in the Sixties, and given them different twists — tinkering with tempos, instrumentations and arrangements to change their energy — and in several cases their impact.

None of the album's songs gets a more major, or heartfelt, makeover than Leonard Bernstein's "America," originally a little joyball from "West Side Story."



During their shows, Lani Hall and Herb Alpert each perform medleys from their old hitmaking bands, Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66 and the Tijuana Brass, respectively. (Photo: Contributed image)

On "Music Vol. 3," Alpert gives the tune a melancholy makeover to reflect the state of the country under the Trump administration — particularly the lack of response to the humanitarian crises created by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in the autumn of 2017.

"That's my little stand politically," he says of the down-tempo, drenched-in-emotion reading of "America." "We didn't do the right thing in Puerto Rico, and I wanted to express how I felt about that.

"Emotion is one thing I always try to bring into my playing," said Alpert, who explained the beginnings of the TJB sound as his trying to evoke the sound and feeling he got from attending bullfights as a young man. "It was a little easier this particular time."

The process of reworking the songs for a 2018 release often came down to trial and error, Alpert said.

"Many times," he said of the if-at-first-you-don't-succeed approach. "In fact, that's how I got 'A Taste of Honey.' I wanted to do it in a special way, and I did that by seeing how many different ways I could play it. I came up with this way, and it was like one of those 'a-ha!' moments. There are quite a few 'a-ha!' moments on this record."

Alpert is also an accomplished sculptor and painter, whose works have been sold — and often sold out — to benefit a number of charitable causes, including music education programs and scholarships. He also heads up the Herb Alpert Foundation, which aids organizations "whose mission is to promote compassion and creativity in our society."

But he'll continue to find the time to out and play live, and maintains a fairly busy performance schedule for a man of 83, even without his other pursuits.

"I want to do it as long as I'm able to," he said, adding that he was inspired by an early interaction with another pretty decent trumpeter, Louis Armstrong.

"I got to play with Armstrong on this TV show," Alpert recalled, "and his goodness, his excitement for life came right through his instrument. From that time, I wanted to be like him, to express myself honestly with my playing."

PREVIEW

Herb Alpert and Lani Hall

Where: Admiral Theatre, 515 Pacific Ave., Bremerton

When: 7 p.m. Oct. 6 (doors open 5:30 p.m.)

Tickets: \$56-\$18

Information: 360-373-6743, admiraltheatre.org



Alpert ruled the MOR airwaves with the Tijuana Brass, then branched out as co-founder of A&M Records with Jerry Moss. (Photo: Contributed image)



Lani Hall met Herb Alpert when she was singing with Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66. (Photo: Contributed image)