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## Profile: Men Alive: Rock Gods

By Erik Siwak



Forget what you think you know about Men Alive, the Orange County Gay Men's Chorus. While the chorus is probably best known for its repertoire of jazz, classical works and show tunes, its members are getting ready to unleash their wild side. On July 13-14, Men Alive will unveil *Rock Star*, a rousing tribute to the history of rock 'n' roll.

Men Alive will take a look back at 50 years of rock music, beginning with legends like Elvis Presley and continuing through more contemporary artists like Bruce Springsteen, Blondie, the B-52s and Coldplay. The show also salutes the role of gay artists in the creation of the classic rock sound, with nods to Elton John and Freddie Mercury.

"It's a unique challenge for a chorus to take on rock and roll in a choral style," Artistic Director Rich Cook says. "But even people who think they don't like rock music will be entertained by the excitement of this music."

*Rock Star* offers a full entertainment experience that promises to appeal to all audiences. There will be a laser show, dancing and special effects all set on a special urban-themed stage. In addition to hard-rocking anthems like Joan Jett's "I Love Rock 'N' Roll" and Queen's "We Will Rock You," audiences can expect ballads like the Police's "Every Breath You Take" and a special a capella version of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors." "We have something for everyone," Cook notes.

Men Alive is celebrating its sixth anniversary. After attending a 2001 Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles concert, Cook decided that it was time for Orange County to have a gay men's chorus of its own. Twelve men showed up for the first rehearsal, and Men Alive was born. By the end of that first year, the chorus had doubled in size to 24 members, and Men Alive was ready to perform its first concert. Community response was enthusiastic, and that debut performance played to a standing-room-only audience. By the end of

their first season, the chorus had nearly doubled in size again to 45 singers.

Today, Men Alive has grown to include more than 100 singers. More popular than ever, the chorus performs at least four concerts a year in addition to various special engagements. The ensemble's recently released debut CD—Curtain Up! Light the Lights!—is a collection of beloved Broadway tunes featuring many audience favorites from the chorus' fifth anniversary concert last December.

As for Rock Star, "I encourage everyone to come to the concert, laugh, shed a tear and maybe have a few world-changing moments," Cook says. "A good time will be had by all."

Men Alive performs Rock Star at UC Irvine's Barclay Theatre on Saturday, July 13, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, July 14, at 3 p.m and 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25-45. For more information, visit [www.menalivechorus.org](http://www.menalivechorus.org).

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