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[Left Field](#)
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Marlins' hurler **Josh Beckett** returns at 1:20 p.m. ET. **"Surfin' with Barry Zito"** will center on audience e-mails at 4:20. **LIVE** [Full Schedule & Archives](#)

Left Field

05/10/2003 12:12 AM ET

Zito lends hero Hest a hand

A's ace performs with one of his favorite musicians

OAKLAND -- You have to think just about every day is pretty cool for a big-league ballplayer, and that probably goes double when you're as young, popular and successful as Barry Zito. But even the A's eccentric ace admits that Thursday was extra cool.

It started with him being presented with the Major League Baseball Players Association's 2002 American League Pitcher of the Year award. It ended with him surrounded by his tight-knit family at a small table in a cozy San Francisco nightclub.

In between the A's won a game and he got to play guitar on stage with his big sister. Then came the topper: He jammed in front of a small, but enthusiastic audience with one of his favorite musicians, singer-songwriter Ari Hest.

"Not bad, huh?" Zito said Friday. "Overall, a very solid day."

"Solid" aptly describes Zito's performance Thursday while lending his string-strumming skills to sister, Sally, and Hest at Johnny Foley's Cellar, just off San Francisco's Union Square.

Sally opened the show and Hest closed it, but Zito *made* it.

"There's probably more people here to see him than me," Hest joked before taking the stage.

A smooth up-and-comer from New York City, Hest was in town as part of a club tour that ends this week in Seattle, and his management team made the wise decision to get the Zitros into the act.

Nothing like a Cy Young winner to boost the gate. But Hest, whose style is likely to remind you of a more soulful John Mayer or a modern James Taylor, said



Left Field

Mychael Urban



A's fan Rachel Rosemire, center, introduced A's pitcher Barry Zito, right, to the music of Ari Hest. (Courtesy of Rachel Rosemire)



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bringing Zito onstage with him was no cheap publicity stunt.

"Barry can play," Hest said. "And he's a fast learner, too."

Sometime in early January of this year, Zito was handed a CD of one of Hest's live shows. It came from A's fan Rachel Rosemire, who struck up a friendship with Zito last season and has been turning him on to new music and live recordings ever since. Zito had never heard of Hest, but after listening to the disc for 10 minutes, he was sold.

"This guy's amazing," Zito marvels. "I couldn't believe I'd never heard him before. He should be big-time right now. He's that good. Seriously."

Word got back to Hest -- again, through Rosemire -- that Zito had become a fan, and the feeling was mutual. Hest's brother/manager, Danny, illustrates the point with a story about the morning after Ari heard of Zito's appreciation for his work.

"We were on the road in a hotel room, just getting up," Danny said, "and all of a sudden, Ari hits me in the head with a pillow and says with this big smile, 'Barry Zito likes my music!' He was like a little kid."

That's part of what made Thursday's pairing so appealing. When it comes to music, Zito is a little kid, too. And anyone in attendance at the show knew exactly what a thrill it was for both men.

"What a rush," Hest said as Zito left the stage following his two-song stint.

Hest, who played four years of high school ball, admitted during Thursday's show that he's a Yankees fan, and as luck would have it, the Yankees are in Oakland this weekend. But Hest, whose sense of humor is evident in a new song titled "The Song Norah Jones Should Sing Instead Of Me Because It Would Sound Better," is no dummy.

Immediately after announcing his allegiance to the Pinstripes, he told the crowd, "I'll be an A's fan tomorrow, though."

And he was. Had to be, in fact. You can't exactly wear a Derek Jeter jersey while Zito is giving you a personal tour of the A's clubhouse. After meeting several Oakland players, including fellow guitar players Scott Hatteberg and Adam Piatt, Hest sat in the stands with the Zito family, including parents Roberta and Joe.

Not bad, huh? Overall, a pretty solid day.

Despite Zito's incredulous protestations, Hest is not big-time. Yet. He has a big following back home in New York and his popularity is growing on the East Coast, but he's a relative unknown in the Bay Area. His first gig in San Francisco was a few months back at the Hotel Utah -- organized in part by, of course, Rosemire -- and maybe 30 people were there. Hest didn't even headline.

"It takes time," says Hest, and his time might be coming. He recently signed with a small label, and his newest album, "Story After Story," is already available through his Web site, arihest.com. You can listen to clips, read his road journal and get information on his shows there, too.

"If you like good music, give this guy a shot and I'll guarantee you'll like him," Zito said. "Then when he's huge, you'll be able to say, 'Oh, I was into this dude a long time ago.'"

And if you like Hest, chances are you'll like Sally Zito's work as well. Like Hest, she played solo Thursday and was joined by Barry for two songs. Sally's first album is still in the works, but you can get a preview by visiting *her* website,

thesallyzitoproject.com. A live version of Barry's first song, "The Boy Next Door," can be heard there, too.

When Thursday night's show came to a close, everyone was smiling. It was midnight. A solid day, indeed.

***Mychael Urban** is a national writer for MLB.com. This story was not subject to approval by Major League Baseball or its clubs.*



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