

MadFolk News

March 12 is just around the corner: Robert Jones and Matt Watroba Benefit Concert for the Wil-Mar Center

Madfolk was looking forward to hosting a live show this past year with Matt Watroba & Robert Jones, but pandemic hit and we all had to put live music on hold for the past year. Although we won't be in the same room to watch this show, I hope you all tune in for the on-line concert, where it will be the next best thing. I look forward to a feeling of our Madfolk Community when we join together with our friends at The Wild Hog in the Woods to help raise some funds for the Wil-Mar Center and help our musician friends too.

So on March 12th, at 7:25 there will be a link that will be posted just before show time on The Wild Hog and the Madfolk webpage, this is a link for a

"zoom" meeting. This will allow you access to the show, and a cool addition to this show is that after the show we will be able to chat with the performers, a little like a question and answer series, and in this little "after party" watch for some special guests to show up, some just may be from Madison, but you'll just have to show up to see who they bring in for special guests. There will be information at time of the show on how to make a donation, but we won't be requiring a specific amount.

We told you a little about the musicians last month in the newsletter, but here are some words of someone who has seen them perform together:

"This show delivers a wonderful and powerful message of love, friendship, tolerance: where we have been, where we are, and hopefully where we can go. It is a walk through the roots and history of American music that not only educates, but entertains. Robert and Matt are consummate professionals, and always a joy to work with. Children and teachers love this interactive show, and the evaluations I get are enthusiastic endorsements and requests to present it again."

- Jennifer Tobin, Arts Coord, Village Theater of Canton

Who Is Doing Live Music Online?

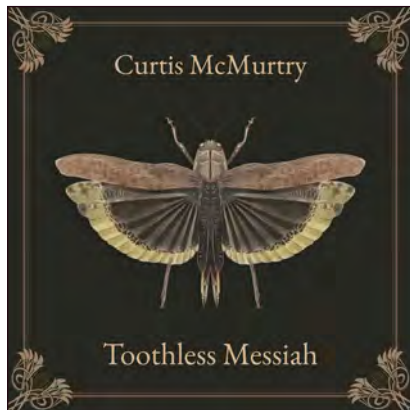
The following former Madison Folk Music Society featured performers (and one partner venue) offer live music content through their website, YouTube, and/or Facebook events. Enjoy!

Name	Website URL	What	How to View
Andrew Calhoun	https://andrewcalhoun.com/	Some videos of live performances	YouTube
Beth Wood	https://www.bethwoodmusic.com/	Livestream concerts, song circles, and workshops	Go to the events page on her website to learn more
Carrie Elkin	http://carriekin.com/	Online concerts	Join her mailing list (through the website) to get news of online events
Carrie Newcomer	https://www.carrienewcomer.com/	Online concerts	Get on her mailing list on her website to stay informed
Charlie Parr	http://www.charlieparr.com/index.html	Did some livestream concerts. Watch for potential for more.	Go to his website to learn more
Christine Lavin	https://christinelavin.com/	Live music from home video(s)	Facebook and YouTube
Claudia Russell	https://www.claudiarussell.com/		
Claudia Schmidt	https://www.claudiaschmidt.com/	Online concerts	View them on YouTube and on her website
Ellis Delaney	https://www.ellisdelaney.com/	Online concerts	Find them through her website
Ellis Paul	https://www.ellispaull.com/	Releasing content on his Patreon page	Become a Patreon subscriber
Jack Williams	http://www.jackwilliamsmusic.com/index.html	Occasional Zoom concerts	Check his website schedule

Listing continued on next page

Jan Krist	https://www.jankristmusic.com/	Doing some live in-person events. Videos of past performances available.	See the videos tab on her website
Jay Ungar & Molly Mason	http://jayandmolly.com/	Regular livestream events "Live from the Quiet Room"	on Facebook
Joe Jencks	https://www.joejencks.com/	Regular online concerts	YouTube - usually on Joe Jencks Music Official and sometimes on other channels collaboration with venues
Joel Mabus	http://www.joelmabus.com/	Regular livestream events	on YouTube
John Gorka	https://www.johngorka.com/	Weekly videos of live performances	Watch on YouTube or Facebook
John McCutcheon	https://www.folkmusic.com/	Live virtual concerts	Ticketed online events: see the show calendar on his website
Josh Harty	https://www.joshharty.com/	"Homemade Distraction" Show Live online weekly	YouTube and Facebook
Kaia Fowler	https://www.kaiafowler.com/	Lovestream Concerts, videos from her upcoming album, and more	From Kaia's website, find links to her YouTube Channel and Facebook page
Katie Dahl	https://katedahlmusic.com/	Weekly Facebook show, Zoom Concerts, gift videos	Learn more on her website
Ken Lonquist	https://www.kenlonquist.com/	Live Facebook streams several times a week	Go to his website for details on their YouTube Channel - find through their website
Lou and Peter Berryman	https://www.louandpeter.com/	Videos of live performances	find through their website
Mary Gauthier	https://www.marygauthier.com/	Private Zoom concerts	Book through her website
Peggy Seeger	http://www.peggyseeger.com/		Facebook
Peter Mulvey	https://www.petermulvey.com/	Regular livestream events	YouTube, Facebook -- also has some live in-person events scheduled for March, 2021
Sally Rogers	https://sallyrogers.com/	Facebook Live Mini Concerts and YouTube uploads	View live on Facebook or view over 200 uploaded "Song a Day" mini concerts on her YouTube Channel
Small Potatoes	http://www.smallpotatoesmusic.com/	Releasing content on their Patreon page	You need to become a subscriber on their Patreon: See their website for details
Susan Werner	http://susanwerner.com/	Susie on Sunday 6pm CT live concerts	YouTube and Facebook
Tracy Grammer	https://www.tracygrammer.com/	Live music streamed online	Find them through her website and on YouTube
Tret Fure	http://www.tretfure.com/	Live from home concerts	Find them through her website
Wild Hog in the Woods	https://www.wildhoginthewoods.org	Concerts every Friday at 7:30pm	Go to the website for details.

TOOTHLESS MESSIAH - CURTIS MCMURTRY 2021



Review by Kiki Schueler

Exhaling the anxiety of the last four years, Curtis McMurtry's new record *Toothless Messiah* feels like a purge of emotion. There is little doubt former president Donald Trump is the inspiration, not when the first track is titled "1/27/2017," and opens "How are you adjusting to the new regime?" A week after Trump's inauguration, the date reflects the introduction of the Muslim ban (one lifted by Biden on his first day in office) and the day McMurtry finished the song. The overall scope isn't nearly that narrow, he describes it sublimely as "a chronicle of collective projections, sketches of power and cowardice, lullabies concerning revolution and escape." There are visions of cult leaders and apocalyptic proclaimers, collective spinelessness and quiet bravery. At 28 minutes, it's a concise volume, only one of the songs breaks the three-minute mark, but that's because the songs are stripped down to their essence, no noodling solos here. It's all about the words, these are "songs for people who like to read," after all (another of his accurate assessments).

That is not to say the music is unimportant. Stark and lush at the same time, it can be jarring and lulling, modest and intricate. In fact, the 53 second "Time Will Eat Them" and the heftier "Saltwood" are expressive instrumentals that hold their own. McMurtry has mostly eschewed the acoustic guitar for this record, turning instead to the banjo and its little cousin the banjolele (a mashup with a ukulele).

Before you start thinking *Deliverance*... actually, on second thought, that's not a bad place to start. The foreboding, the undercurrent of terror, the threat of violence, the helplessness, all run through these songs. Much of the dark magic comes from longtime collaborator Diana Burgess and her cello. A member of classical indie crossover band *Mother Falcon*, Burgess balances McMurtry musically and vocally, and is key to the record's richness and depth. Upping the complexity are muted trumpet, trombone, baritone saxophone, upright bass, pedal steel and percussion.

McMurtry used to claim that he only had sad songs and mean songs, but he can add angry to that set of adjectives. The title track refers to weak leaders and the limits of allegiance. The bottom line is that supporters earned with lies are only faithful as long as it benefits them, beware. "So I'm loyal until I get hungry and there's never been enough to go around, so if they say your name and offer me the silver you should know I can't afford to turn it down." "The Calvary is Here" may sound hopefully optimistic, but not when the second line is "but they have already surrendered." The aggressive cello drives the song, while the trumpet protests. Inaction is the same as acceptance, and perhaps we only have ourselves to blame, "every now and then we catch the hell that we deserve." The baritone sax gives voice to the sheep from the other side of the fence on "Praise Caesar," though they may not be completely blind in their support. "You are not without your faults, but I forgive you, and though some may disapprove, I know sometimes it takes a tyrant to get the rest of us to move."

The plinking of the banjolele hides the dark heart of "Around My Neck" which recognizes the evil but is lulled into not fighting back. The song features smart lyrics behind its scathing inditement, "and though you never keep a promise still they believe

you are sincere. You're patient as a spider your intentions just as clear." Rattling percussion like Jacob Marley dragging his chains pushes "Dinosaurs" along as we realize what was revolutionary becomes antiquated all too soon, "we would not be here without them, obsolete as they may seem." "Lion on a Leash" condemns those who won't fight dirty, "but taking the high road's for suckers, it just means you have further to fall." McMurtry may call them lullabies, but these are not the kind that lead to sweet dreams.

Mad Folk News is published monthly by the Madison Folk Music Society, a non-profit, volunteer-led society dedicated to fostering folk music in the Madison area.

Contact us at madfolk@charter.net. Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at www.madfolk.org.

www.facebook.com/pages/Madison-Folk-Music-Society/34497984835

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Women and Folk:

An Historical Perspective and Who I'm listening to Now

Throughout the history of folk music, women have been portrayed from many perspectives, some distorted and some true. The portraits of women in folk songs—especially traditional folk—have too often been stereotypical and negative, yet folk songs have also served to embolden and lift up women's voices. Traditional and contemporary folk lyrics often romanticized and moralized ("Barbara Allen"—traditional), idealized ("Darcy Farrow"—Gillette & Campbell), or demonized ("The Farmer's Curst Wife"—traditional) women. Many folk songs witness the lives of marginalized women, like the woman feeling trapped in brothel work in "House of the Rising Sun" (traditional), or the teen girl shunted away to a home for unwed mothers in the song "Unwed Fathers" by John Prine.

When we listen to women writers and singers, we often hear other sides of familiar stories and more empowered portraits of women. We find women who are strong ("Four Women"—Nina Simone), call out sexist double standards ("Just Because I'm a Woman"—Dolly Parton), gain their independence from bad marriages ("Sam Jones Blues"—Bessie

Smith; "Fast Car"—Tracey Chapman), assert control over their reproductive choices ("The Pill"—Loretta Lynn; "Play God"—Ani DiFranco), and advocate for empathy—rather than competition—between women ("As Cool as I Am"—Dar Williams). Women benefit from hearing their stories told in song. I cannot count the times songs by artists like Carrie Newcomer, Carole King, and Joni Mitchell have gotten me through difficulties by giving me a way to feel and express my emotions, a way to feel understood. And I am not alone in this experience of music.

The search for belonging, understanding, and community flows through the folk experience, and the women's music movement is no exception. Frustrated with the lack of representation on stages, Sarah McLachlan founded Lilith Fair in 1997. What emerged was a recognition that acoustic and folk music—singer-songwriter music—more than pop or rock appealed to women looking for a community. The New York Times (2002) quoted Tret Fure as saying, "There's something about the folk format, maybe the intimacy, that makes it a very effective way for women to connect with other women."

Women's music also created a space for lesbian and queer women artists like Fure, Indigo Girls, Pamela Means and other contemporary singer-songwriters to share their voices. We can thank the queer women of the 1970s, such as Madeline Davis, Maxine Feldman, and Cris Williamson for planting the seeds for the greater diversity we enjoy today.

The wide range of voices in the folk genre has always appealed to me, kept me curious and engaged. Like other aspects of society, the folk community needs to continue to look at ways to become more inclusive, to welcome all whose music grows from the same musical roots. I would like to see this tree we call the folk music community grow larger and broader over time, ever stronger and more beautiful, all nurtured by the solid trunk of traditional music sprung from diverse cultures. In honor of Women's History Month and all of the women who have inspired us, I invite you to join me in exploring and listening to today's diverse women of folk voices. Here are a few I am listening to now along with excerpts about them taken from online sources.

Column continued on next page

On the Air



Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Dan Robinson, Host

Sun 5:00-8:00pm

Concerts recorded in Wisconsin, music and dance of people the world over. For playlists, calendars, station listings, and more, visit www.wpr.org/simplyfolk



WORT 89.9 FM community radio visit <https://wortfm.org> for more info!

- Weekdays 9:00am - noon - "On the Horizon" w/ Ford Blackwell, Paul Novak, Gloria Hays & Helena White
- Mon - Global Revolutions (folk from the world over) w/ Dan Talmo & Martin Alvarado
- Tue - Another Green Morning w/ Mac Robertson & Brian Hirsch
- Wed - Back to the Country (country music on a theme) w/ Bill Malone
- Thur - Diaspora (folk and international) w/ Terry O'
- Fri - Mud Acres (bluegrass and acoustic) w/ Chris Powers



WVMO The Voice of Monona - Promoting the best in Good Music - Roots Music - Americana Music

Plus Community Members Hosted Shows

Streaming Live and on your mobile device through tunein radio

Crys Matthews | <http://crysmatthews.com/>

Taken from the About section of Matthew's website:

Ask about the new generation of social justice music-makers and Crys Matthews will be mentioned. A prolific lyricist, Matthews blends Americana, folk, jazz, blues, bluegrass and funk into a bold, complex performance steeped in traditional melodies punctuated by honest, original lyrics. "While each and every day, on each and every media platform, we're reminded of the division, alienation, marginalization, and divisiveness rampant in our country (and our world), we're not often enough met with people like Matthews," said Justin Hiltner of Bluegrass Situation, "who exist as reminders of what beauty can occur when we bridge those divides."

A southeastern North Carolina native who now calls Washington, DC home, Matthews has been compared to everyone from Toshi Reagon to Tracy Chapman to Ruthie Foster. Equally at home in an acoustic listening room as she is on stage at large music festivals, Matthews has quickly gathered a loyal following on the east coast playing such prestigious venues as the Sundance Film Festival, The Birchmere, The Hamilton, and Jammin' Java. Matthews' festival and showcase roster has included BMI's Island Hopper Songwriter Festival, the 40th Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Folk Alliance International, 30A Songwriters Festival, Northeast Regional Folk Alliance and many more. Thoughtful, realistic and emotional, Matthews' songs speak to the voice of our generation and remind us why music indeed soothes the soul.

Videos and more are available on her website.

Our Native Daughters | <https://folkways.si.edu/songs-of-our-native-daughters>

(Rhiannon Giddons, Amythyst, Kiah, Leyla McCalla, Allison Russell)

Taken from the Folkways website about the group:

Songs of Our Native Daughters shines new light on African-American women's stories of struggle, resistance, and hope. Pulling from and inspired by 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century sources, including slave narratives and early minstrelsy, kindred banjo players Rhiannon Giddons, Amythyst Kiah, Leyla McCalla, and Allison Russell reinterpret and create new works from old ones. With unflinching, razor-

sharp honesty, they confront sanitized views about America's history of slavery, racism, and misogyny from a powerful, black female perspective. These songs call on the persistent spirits of the daughters, mothers, and grandmothers who have fought for justice – in large, public ways – only now being recognized, and in countless domestic ways that will most likely never be acknowledged.

"An artistic mission to supplant the portrayals of slavery as an abstract, ancient sin with the imaginative, immersive contemplation of its individual human impact and aftermath" – NPR

Sarah Jarosz | <https://www.sarahjarosz.com/>

Taken from Jarosz's website:

With her captivating voice and richly detailed songwriting, Sarah Jarosz has emerged as one of the most compelling musicians of her generation. A three-time Grammy Award-winner at the age of 28, the Texas native started singing as a young girl and became an accomplished multi-instrumentalist by her early teens. After releasing her full-length debut "Song Up in Her Head" at 18-years-old, she went on to deliver such critically lauded albums as *Follow Me Down*, *Build Me Up From Bones*, and 2016's *Undercurrent*, in addition to joining forces with Sara Watkins and Aoife O'Donovan to form the acclaimed Grammy winning folk trio I'm With Her.

In the making of her new album *World On the Ground*, the New York City-based artist collaborated with producer/songwriter John Leventhal: a five-time Grammy Award-winner known for his work with Elvis Costello, Shawn Colvin, and his wife Rosanne Cash. Working almost entirely on their own, the two musicians crafted a subtle tapestry of sound perfectly suited to Jarosz's lyrical storytelling. In a departure

from the nuanced introspection of her previous work, *World On the Ground* unfolds as a finely wrought collection of stories from her hometown of Wimberley, Texas (population: 2,626), presenting a series of character sketches nearly novelistic in emotional scope. As she inhabits characters both real and imagined—exploring the tension and inertia of small-town living, the desire for escape and the ease of staying put—Jarosz reveals her remarkable gift for slipping into the inner lives of others and patiently uncovering so much indelible insight.

Yasmin Williams | <http://www.yasminwilliamsmusic.com/>

Reprinted from the *No Depression* review of Williams's latest album, *Urban Driftwood*

Yasmin Williams' second LP, *Urban Driftwood* (out Jan. 29), is a meditation on 2020 and the events of the last four years. Multi-instrumentalist Williams finished most of the songs during the COVID-19 lockdowns last year and as Black Lives Matter protesters called for change and justice...

The songs on *Urban Driftwood* are arborescent. "Sunshowers" and "Jarabi" both begin with quiet, small-scale guitar melodies but sprout as Williams' intricate, root-like system of notes unfolds and the songs eventually grow into mighty, nourishing, and breathtaking entities. In other moments of beauty, the softness of "I Wonder" will encourage you to drop your shoulders and unclench your jaw, the gentle flight of "Dragonfly" will transport you to a lush field in the middle of the summer, and the pulsating rhythm of "Swift Breeze" will blow away the cobwebs in your heart. *Urban Driftwood* is as dizzyingly magnificent as staring up at the night sky on a clear night and seeing the universe unfold before your very eyes. ~ Laura Stanley, January 21, 2021

ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendar for **March 14th** for the Madison Folk Music Society's Annual Meeting.

This year we will be meeting at 5:00pm and of course the meeting will be virtual.

Details will be posted on our website soon!



About About the Song

Disclaimer: Vermont's Steve Gillette and his music and life partner Cindy Mangsen, no strangers to **MadFolk**, have been dear friends and idols of mine for decades. I swear this has not influenced my review but should add that the party-size Oreo package may have swayed me a little.

Legendary songwriter Steve Gillette has a new project. Every week for the past year or so he has written an exhaustive entry for his web-available series [About the Song](#). Each article is at least 1500 words long. At 1500 words per week, that's over 85,000 words so far. That's more words than [Macbeth](#), [Midsummer Night's Dream](#), and [Hamlet](#) put together, and this is dense, info packed stuff -- no fluff -- for history buffs, songwriters, song lovers, videographers, economists, sociologists, philosophers and in fact, thinking people of all passions. This series is what I hope [Whither Zither](#) will be like when it grows up.

Usually Steve's weekly pieces are each based on one song. But as of this writing, his five most recent episodes are all about another of Steve's breathtaking projects of over ten years, called [The Man](#), a combination historical novel, to be released sometime this year (2021), and accompanying, narrated (by fictional narrator) multiple-song CD, already released in 2010. The tracks consist of old jazz standards plus original songs by Steve, and features many master musicians including Steve's stride-piano-playing father.

The "Man" is Danny Murrow, fictitious great uncle of the CD's fictitious narrator. Steve says, "Danny is the central character in the work. According to the story, he wrote a memoir in 1939 recounting his life in the music business of the twenties and thirties." The novel that accompanies the CD consists of this ostensible memoir.

So these five [About The Song](#) articles cover this project, with links to some of the stupendous tracks, excerpts from the novel, audio segments of the CD narration, videos, and in some cases, detailed and fascinating music theory discussions of the songs' musical elements.

This sort of in-depth multi-media coverage is a feature of all of Steve's episodes. Steve is a polymath of the first order, so various aspects of the songs are discussed in detail, but lead to more far-ranging and in depth essays on a multitude of subjects.

Most of the episodes are about songs written or co-written by Steve, which is as it should be, as no one knows more about the back stories, origins, and subsequent lives of a song than its author. Here's an almost random mention of just a smidgeon of Steve's columns:

The series begins with one of Steve's more popular songs, [Darcy Farrow](#), co-written in 1964 with his pal Tom Campbell. This song has been recorded by over three hundred singers including the likes of John Denver and Linda Ronstadt. My music partner Lou and I first learned Darcy Farrow in 1965 from a recording of it by Ian and Sylvia.

The article on [Darcy Farrow](#) contains a friendly tale of the origins and destinies of the song, the lyrics (lyrics are always posted), a video of Steve and Cindy singing it, a video lesson by Steve on how to play it on guitar, and an impressive list of some of those who have sung it.

In an entry about [Song for Gamble](#), written in tribute to the great Gamble Rogers, amazing songwriter and story teller, who died trying to save a man from drowning, Steve writes of Gamble's life but also of "hero songs," talks of days with Gamble at New York's [Bitter End](#) and paints a sweet picture of his own days living in The City in the mid 60s. The article features a video tribute put together by Steve which includes a short clip of Gamble performing, along with a live video of Steve and Cindy singing the song.

In the article about [Glass Houses](#), written with Tammy Wynette in mind, Steve talks about the songwriting techniques used, and lets his co-writer, Rex Benson, describe the arduous effort involved in getting the song to Tammy. The audio of Tammy's version is included, along with a collage video Steve made for his recording of the song with Cindy.

For the song [Always a Train in My Dreams](#), written with Charles John Quarto, Steve delves into the heritage of train songs, branches off into research on the history of railroad workers and hobos, speaks of his

own childhood memories of steam trains, and more. Again, there are videos of performances of the song.

One of my favorite compositions by Steve is [Home By Dark](#). After talking about its inspiration and relationship to his boyhood, he goes into detail about the structure of this song. Many of his articles touch lightly on music theory and others go deeply into it. This article is sort of in the middle of this continuum. As a musician myself (some would argue), I find these conversations fascinating, clear, and important to understanding the craft. I feel that many people, including me, like a song very much but don't know why. With Steve's explanations of song form, music theory, and lyric composition, he helps all of us understand what it is about a particular song that makes it connect. No wonder from reading these pieces that Steve has become internationally known as a master songwriting author, teacher and songwriting workshop leader.

Another of my favorite Steve songs is [Other People's Money](#). In his 2500 word discussion about this song, he outlines the role of songwriters in exposing injustice and works his way into the nasty nature of the US banking industry and its history, in dismaying detail.

The digressions, the histories, the asides that enrich Steve's articles are stimulating and beautifully written. As a matter of fact, some of his episodes have no song at all, May 16's entry is called [Writer's Block](#). In this column not only does Steve speak of his own wrestles with this gremlin, he includes videos of experts Rollo May, Lewis Hyde, and Abraham Maslow speaking on the fundamentals of creativity.

Some songs are covered that Steve didn't write, like the hilarious [Rudy's Big Adventure](#) by his partner Cindy Mangsen, great songwriter herself. And on and on. I could rave and rave about the marvels of these astonishing pages. I implore you to take a gander at this collection of multimedia treasures.

WZ for March 2021

Boy these Oreos are good. Vegan, too.

Link: aboutthesong.com/

Or go to Steve and Cindy's website:

compassrosemusic.com And look for the link to "[About the Song](#)" where you'll find links to "[This Week's Article](#)" and "[Archive of Past Articles](#)."

"WHEN IS MY RENEWAL DUE?"

(Hint: It is NOT the date on the mailing label!)

The date shown on the mailing label is NOT your membership expiration date! There has been some confusion lately, and we apologize for that. The date is just the date the labels were printed, as new cost-saving postal procedures do not allow us to include expiration dates there anymore. When it is time to renew, we will send you a personal notice by mail or email. At that point you will be able to either mail a check or renew online at www.madfolk.org. If you have questions about your membership in the meantime, send email to info@madfolk.org. Thanks for your membership and support of Mad Folk!

Way #1 – online

Visit www.madfolk.org and click on "Join MFMS"

Way #2 – unplugged

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