

MadFolk News

John McCutcheon - Livestream show (ticketed)

♪ Madfolk has been a longtime supporter of John McCutcheon (who is originally from Wausau!) and we are extremely excited to support him in his live concert stream as we all work to make our way in the current world of Covid.

Check out this link and John will tell you a little more about the shows: <https://vimeo.com/666930695>

IF YOU USE THIS LINK <https://tinyurl.com/MadFolkMcCutcheon>

TO PURCHASE YOUR TICKET, A SMALL AMOUNT OF THE TICKET SALE WILL COME BACK TO MADFOLK.

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The Golden Guide to Folk Musicians

You may be thinking now that I have a [*insert folk instrument here*] I would like to become a folk musician. With this guide, we describe the habitat, behaviors, and species of indigenous folk musicians. We also offer tips on where to find folk musicians. Out of scope of this guide are musicians that actually make a living performing folk music. They are a rare, talented, and tenuous breed, worthy of having money thrown at them (see below).

How To Use This Guide

Perhaps you have received a folk instrument as a gift or inherited it. Maybe you have spent thousands of dollars on a new instrument and you are now sleeping on a cot in the living room. However you have come by your instrument, you have nothing to lose except stress, anger, and perhaps the company of your cat. It is a myth that you need to practice for 10,000 hours before playing out. Following these six easy steps will get you on your way. (1) Spend a lot of time simply listening to folk music that you really enjoy. (2) Listen to more music, any category. (3) Learn how to tune and get simple, pleasant sounds out of your instrument. (4) Figure out three basic chords or three favorite melodies on your instrument, and perhaps invest in a capo or some picks. (5) Go find a jam. (6) Keep listening.

Where To Look for Folk Musicians

Folk musicians are everywhere. One doesn't need to journey to the hills of Mexico or East Virginia to find them. They are frequently heard in pubs where they valiantly compete with the house music or football announcers, oblivious to the death rays shooting from the eyes of the guy drinking

Schlitz at the bar. If you don't find them inside the tavern, check the sidewalk as they may have already been evicted, a reliable occurrence for folk musicians in venues where alcohol is served. Folk musicians in outdoor environments elicit a spectrum of emotional responses from passersby, which can result in money being thrown at them.

One frequently finds folk musicians in the woodshed. Once established, they can be extremely hard to remove. The best way to eliminate folk musicians from your outbuildings is to introduce three or four additional folk musicians into the space and lock the doors for 48 hours with a large plate of oatmeal cookies and some tasty beverages.

Organic cultivation is the only way to propagate folk musicians, as they reproduce primarily using their ears. During the Summer, they congregate at abandoned campgrounds and parks and engage in long sessions of... musical exchange. By the end of the growing season, one can often find bushels of them at farmer's markets or riding around on hay wagons at hobby farms. Because folk music is not palatable to the general population, Big Music has never successfully been able to monetize it. Yet a small subpopulation of every generation are drawn to folk music like hardtack connoisseurs to a Gettysburg reenactment. Thus, folk music traditions will carry on until the rocks melt in the sun, long after popular music is erased from the mix tape of humanity.

Folk Moots

Now you are ready to go exploring. There are some publicized participatory folk music events that may provide a clue to the type of music that will be played. The terms 'blue-

grass jam', 'Irish session', 'old-time festival' or 'hootenanny' actually don't offer too much insight on what to expect. The direction of a music gathering will be entirely driven by who shows up and what they like to play. Once you have attended your first session, you may find that you have been assimilated into a network not unlike a vast forest floor fungus. You will soon be able to sniff out the chemical trail to all sorts of folk music events, sometimes hundreds of miles away.

Let's say that you have walked into your first session, [*insert folk instrument here*] in hand. What now? Smile and say hello. With very rare exception, you will be warmly welcomed into a jam if it was advertised as an open session. If you are pretty close to bolting back out the door, remove one of your shoes and give it to a stranger for safe keeping. The next and most important thing to do is to listen and observe. Is everyone playing in unison? Are musicians taking turns improvising or carrying the melody? If all of the music is happening on a stage, and you are approached by a sound engineer with a sign-up sheet, you are not really at a jam. You are at an open mic event. Although often billed as jams, they are not an efficient use of learning time, as most of the event is spent waiting to stand for a few self-conscious minutes on the stage for an audience largely comprised of other musicians who are checking their watches until they get to play. The best sessions for exchanging musical ideas in any genre are circle jams. If you see people with instruments sitting around a table oblivious to everything around them with a stopped clock hanging on the wall behind them, pull up a chair.

Guide continued on following page

Guide continued from front page

Identification of Common Folk Musicians

Guitar Players

The most common species, they are ubiquitous in all forms of folk music. Guitar players are advised to keep their nails well-manicured because other musicians will be staring at their hands to see what chords they are playing. In bluegrass, the same basic chord shapes are used in multiple keys by using capos, so to read a bluegrass guitar player, knowledge of only a few basic hand shapes may be needed, although deep comprehension of the first seven letters of the alphabet is very important. If the guitar is the gateway drug of folk music, it also offers a lifetime of experimentation and a golden ticket into every session, no matter the style.

Fiddle Players

The fiddle is one of the most expressive instruments and requires a certain degree of confidence to play out. It is perfectly suited to melody and can offer emotional accents when singing is involved. It is also an effective rhythm instrument. The simple act of drawing a bow across a few strings may take a couple of lifetimes to master, and there are as many styles as there are fiddlers under the sun. The fiddle is loud and proud and the fiddler is often the sort of person at a session who is the first one to jump off the pier into the lake on Memorial Day, craving the exhilaration of diving into cold unknown waters.

Bass Players

If folk music were a brain, the bass is the cerebellum. Without it, the music collective would require life support, usually provided by banjo, percussion, or guitar CPR. Bass players themselves are very solitary creatures. If a new bass player walks in the front door, the existing bass player senses them using echolocation. With a flare of the nostrils, the bass is laid on the floor or propped up in the corner. The newcomer then resumes giving life to the music while the existing player joins friends at the bar, or picks up an alternate instrument. Only one cerebellum at a time is generally permitted in a folk session, but you may experience exciting evolutionary exceptions.

Ukulele Players

Ukulele players are the sea otters of

folk music. Gregarious and fun-seeking, they are often seen playing happily and irreverently in groups or relaxing in lounge chairs around the music theory pool. (Don't be fooled, they are also excellent swimmers). Their instruments are just as easy going. Portable with welcoming tunings and soft strings, easy to strum. The ukulele is non-competitive and highly cooperative. Occasionally the ukulele player may be discriminated against as being 'non-traditional' in some circles, to which the ukulele player reacts by chuckling and strumming the opening chords to Dancing Queen.

Banjo Players

Loved. Hated. Ridiculed. Ridiculous. Tell great jokes. Can't take a joke. There are too many banjos here. Gee could we use a banjo right about now. One of the most essential folk instruments, the banjo has had the most colorful and controversial history. It is the instrument most likely to elicit a subconscious emotional response. Banjos have caused the lame to dance and the silent to sing. They provoke some educated people to leave the room, and some uneducated folks to earn a PhD. Overwhelmingly, the banjo is one of the most exciting and impactful folk instruments and can be played in a great variety of ways. Banjo players naturally leave their mark on every session they attend, and perhaps leave the world a little bit better in doing so.

Mandolin Players

These are the schizophrenics of the folk music session. With an instrument that can play melody, rhythm, and percussion all at once it's no wonder that mandolin players are often confused and cajoled by the music to do weird unconventional things on their instruments. The redundant nature of the eight mandolin strings enhances the neurotic tendencies of the mandolin player as the tightly wound paired strings are rarely in perfect tune. Although perfectly at home in bluegrass, mandolins tend to have an inferiority complex in other styles of music where everyone plays in unison as they can be drowned out by the louder fiddles and banjos. However, the versatile mandolin is the spackle strengthening the melody or rhythm cracks in the collective brick wall,

and their absence is noticed by the chilly air pooling around everyone's ankles.

Percussionists

Having a dedicated percussionist at a jam frees up the other musicians to take on new responsibilities outside of the beat monitor. As the bass is the central nervous system, the percussion is the skeleton. The beauty of percussion is that there is a vast multitude of instruments available, from expensive bodhrans to cheap washboards. Some percussionists arrive empty handed, armed (legged?) with only a pair of rundown boots. As wide as the spectrum is, percussionists have two very essential jobs. First, they need to keep an even, steady beat. Second, they need to keep melody players in line that get so excited that they stop listening and take off like a Concord on a Heathrow runway. In some instances, the bass and percussionist may join forces to keep the tune from accelerating into a chaotic vortex of notes capable of ripping off roofs and destroying livestock.

Accidentals

There is a place for everyone at the roost, even if you are blown thousands of miles off course. There are however some things to keep in mind if you are the only blue footed booby in the puffin colony. First, you need to consider that the volume and tone of your instrument blends with the other instruments. If you play something acoustically quieter than other instruments, amplification may be mindfully considered, although even a small amount of amplification can overwhelm an acoustic session. Second, you have brought your strange traditions into a new tribe who may be fearful of what they don't understand. Be gentle and show that you come in peace. Don't display the full red dewlap of your accordion at a bluegrass session or you may incite aggression. Likewise, baritone saxophone, be aware that your E flat may be the stuff of nightmares to a skittish mandolin player.

We hope that this golden guide helps you explore the wide variety of folk music in your backyard. Under every mossy rock and rotting log there is a universe for you to discover! Why not get your hands dirty?

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/ Brian Hirsch

• Wed - Back to the Country (country music on a theme) w/ Bill Malone

• Thur - Hejira (folk and international) w/ Gloria Hays, George Dreckmann, Jeff Spitzer-Resnick & Paul Novak

• Fri - Mud Acres (bluegrass and acoustic) w/ Chris Powers



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Weekly new song Facebook Live event. Song Premiere on Tuesday (SPOT) at 11AM
facebook.com/stuart.stotts

Venues

NORTH STREET • Sat, Feb 26th - Trio Soleil - @8pm

CABARET • Fri, Mar 4th - Ellis Paul - @8:30pm - \$25

610 North St

Madison, WI

northstreetcabaret.com

Gigs

Sugar Maple Concert Series

• Fri, Feb. 11th, 2022, 8pm - Jake Blount and Laurel Premo @ North Street Cabaret , 610 North Street, Madison - \$15-\$22

• Sun, Feb. 27th, 2022, 7pm - Rachel Baiman @ North Street Cabaret , 610 North Street, Madison - \$13-\$20

• Thu, Mar. 10th, 2022, 8pm - The Faux Paws @ North Street Cabaret, 610 North Street, Madison, \$13-\$20

Common Chord

• Sat, Mar. 5th, 2022, 7:30pm - Tickets recommended in Advance.

See <https://www.portagecenterforthearts.com/> to purchase - \$20 (Students \$10)

301 E. Cook Street, Portage, WI

Wintergrass

• Feb 24 to Feb 27 - four-day, family-friendly bluegrass and acoustic music festival, with concerts and dances at four different stages. Music education programs for kids and adults, workshops, impromptu jams

More details: <https://wintergrass.com/>

Tickets for Livestreaming Wintergrass Festival concerts available on Mandolin: <https://mandolin.com>

My Highway Home

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If Our Instruments Could Talk: Part 1

By the time you read this, we will be solidly one month into 2022. A time for resolutions, broken resolutions and firmer resolve to return to those same resolutions. While I gave up on "New Year's" resolutions a long time ago, I still resolve to be on a journey of growth every year: evolving and expanding my capacity, knowledge, and especially my commitment to self-care. My birthday is February 1st, so I have always felt like January was a grace period. I get to try on resolutions for a month and see if I want to keep them, before I hit my own New Year. Nurturing creativity is indeed self-care. And I have decided that one of the things I want to do this year is to spend more time with my instruments. Not just the three that are consistently on the road with me, my workhorses, my stalwart and steadfast companions, but ALL of my instruments. I think each one has something to say to me, if I will only take the time to listen.

I was five years old when I first started playing stringed instruments. It began with my sister Julie's Mandolin. She brought it home from college on a break. I LOVED IT. I could not stop noodling on it. I played for so many hours that I gave myself blisters. But it was so much fun. It felt like having some sort of genuine power in my hands. Not something a five-year-old has much of. Sadly, my sister had the nerve to take that Mandolin back to college with her at the end of the break. But she left me with something much more important, a vision of what was possible. I could make music!

When I was eight, a family friend was moving to Seattle and taking only what he and his wife could fit in their old Buick Skylark. His classical guitar was going to get left behind in Rockford, IL. He asked my parents for permission to give the instrument to me. They said yes of course, and I finally had my VERY OWN guitar. Holy cow. That instrument was my companion for years. It was my only guitar until I was just at the end of 8th grade. I named the instrument "Bealey" after the last name of the man who gave it to me – Steve Bea (pronounced Bay). I still have that Garcia classical guitar. It needs a new set of strings, but it's in the basement studio, along with a row of other axes I've acquired in my life. Each of these instruments in their own way represent a moment of triumph, a journey of discovery, and an evolution in my musicianship. But Bealey still represents something unique.

It was the first instrument that was all mine! And my first long-time musical companion. That instrument and our dog Roy were frequently my two very best childhood friends.

Growing up in a large family, one learns to share a lot of things. But certain things are allowed to the individual, like the ownership of certain musical instruments. The piano belonged to the family, but the violin was Jen's. The trombone was Jerry's, but remained in the house after he had moved out and was ipso facto, communal property. I tried it several times when I was young, but could never make any real sense out of it. I had fun though.

Late in the summer after 8th grade, I bought my first guitar with money I had earned at an unexpected summer job. It was an Applause (mid-level Ovation line) 12-String. I loved that instrument so much. With a beautiful rusty orange sunburst top, it went everywhere with me. Home, friend's houses, school, church, family vacations, neighborhood parks, gaming nights with friends, wherever I was going that guitar came along. I wrote scores of songs on that instrument. Most of them were not keepers into adulthood, but I did so love the playing of that instrument. It was a constant companion. Late at night, I would sit on the couch in my parent's living room and quietly play as a way of winding down my day. It was my evening meditation. That instrument absorbed so much of my joy, sorrow, sadness, teen angst, grief, triumph, hope, wonder, and love. If that instrument could talk to me now, I wonder what it would say?

I fell in love with a Washburn EA20 Acoustic Electric 12-String during my sophomore year in high school. It was a thin-body guitar, painted all white with black binding. That was my next best musical friend. I named it "White Buffalo" after the Lakota spiritual ideas surrounding the White Buffalo – a notion introduced to me by Rod MacDonald's song of the same name. Easier to play than the Applause owing to its flat back and thinner profile, it had onboard EQ and I could plug it in! I wrote dozens of songs on that guitar. But I also realized that not every situation or song called for a 12-String. So, during my junior year in high school, I bought a Washburn EA20 Acoustic Electric 6-String. It had an interesting metallic platinum-fleck and black marbling pattern in the finish. Pretty snazzy. It also had a marvelous sound, and the nov-

elty of finally owning my own 6-String steel string was inspiring. I wrote numerous songs on that guitar as well. I named it "Kitten Eyes" after a nursery rhyme my father used to recite.

Now here I was, a junior in high school with a conspicuous abundance of instruments. I now owned four guitars, three of which I bought with my own money. I was proud of that. And I loved all of the instruments. I would pull them all out sometimes and rotate playing one and then the other, exploring tone, timbre, sustain, resonance, and overall feel. Different songs emerged from each of those instruments and I played them all at different times and for different reasons. But slowly the Washburn 6-String became the most played. It stayed in tune the best and I could plug it in when needed. And when I went away to music conservatory, it was the two Washburn EA20s that traveled with me. And like my brother's old trombone, the Garcia classical and the Applause 12-String stayed behind under the baby grand piano in the living room - the de facto storage space for instruments in the Jencks household.

In the wake of my father's death after my freshman year at university, those instruments - all of them - were my truest solace. I would go to the cemetery and sit by my Dad's grave and play, write, tell him stories and converse with his memory, weep, journal, and repeat. Those instruments would comfort and guide me, allow me to make sense of a world that had lost all order, reason, and orientation. They were my life-raft in the tempest.

I let the Applause 12-String go on trade for

Column continued on next page

Joe Jencks is 22-year veteran of the international Folk scene, an award winning songwriter and vocalist, and a contributing writer to numerous publications. For more information please visit: www.joejencks.com.

*Joe Jencks also hosts a monthly radio show called **My Highway Home** on the new Folk Music network – **Folk Music Notebook**. MHH features interviews with people Joe meets in his travels and music by many artists from the big tent that is Folk Music. Tune in on the second Sunday of each month at 5:00 PM CT. Rebroadcast at 10:00 PM CT on the same night and again the following Wednesday at 11:00 AM CT.*

Listen in online via:

www.folkmusicnotebook.com

Column continued from previous page a Giannini Craviola, while I was in college. I was playing a few Renaissance Fairs in the summers, and the Craviola looked more like a 500-year-old lute, than anything I had. I regret 30 years later having let go of the Applause. I hope it has had a good life. I hope some other kid got their hands on it and found joy, as I did. Or some adult learner who had always wanted a decent playable 12-String, and could afford a used Applause. Nonetheless, it is the guitar that haunts me sometimes. Not because I miss playing it per se, but because it was my best friend for a time. And if it could talk, it would tell you of many adventures, including going all the way to Alaska and back via the Al-Can Highway. It would tell you of the circus that got stuck waiting for the ferry boat across the Yukon River in Dawson City, while traveling to Fairbanks. And of the elephants we saw playing and frolicking in the Yukon River. A scene that harkened whimsically and majestically back to the time of the Mastodon and Woolly Mammoth.

I moved to Seattle when I was 22 and discovered just how many AMAZING guitars there really were in the world. We live in the golden age of the acoustic guitar. I am not sure when it began, but for me it started in 1994, in Seattle. I discovered an array of stunning hand-made and partially hand-made instruments. Eventually I bought two Taylor guitars, a 710 and a 712. They are sibling guitars, both made of Brazilian Rosewood from the same tree, both with Engelman Spruce tops, both AMAZING. The tone of such fine wood so well-honed and crafted, so well assembled, was revolutionary in my playing. For the first time since I was a child, instruments grabbed me with a kind of allure that was simply irresistible. I couldn't NOT play them. Every hour that was not spoken for by work, sleep, food, or needed social time with friends, was spent on those two guitars. They inspired me to practice and they made me a better musician.

There is a huge difference between acoustic instruments made of solid wood vs. laminate instruments. And these two hand-assembled Brazilian Rosewood Taylors were my next great teachers on the journey. In the wake of my mother's passing when I was 24, I again dove into my relationship with instruments as my truest and some days only real solace. Grief and the extraordinary craft of fine luthiers combined to create the circumstances by which I built a deep and abiding relationship with those two guitars. As a result, my mid-20s became another time of rapid and intense musical growth. I played in Celtic

bands, performed solo as a singer-songwriter, I accompanied other musicians, and I even played a few Jazz gigs. The flashy Washburn 6-String was a favorite for those occasions.

And then the moment came, after years of preparation, training, practice, and lessons in the school of hard-knocks; it was time to hit the road for real. I knew I wanted an instrument even better than the ones I had. I was going to quit my day-gig and start touring full-time. So I bought a brand-new Saturn station-wagon, and started looking for a new guitar to mark that line in the sand, that great leap of faith into my own creativity and possibility. And so it was that in the fall of 2000, I fell madly in love with a stunning instrument, hand-made stem to stern in Hawaii by James Goodall. It is crafted from gorgeous Hawaiian Koa and old-growth Engelman Spruce, with Brazilian Rosewood binding. And for the last 22 years, that instrument has been my constant companion. It was seriously "next level" in the art of modern luthiers; the tone-wood, the bracing, the attention to detail all being meticulous. And it has blossomed into an instrument that is truly magical. I named the Goodall "Cerise" after my beloved and patient music teacher Cerise Reed. She died far too young, not long after I started touring full-time. Her hair was the color of the Koa, and her voice was mellow, pure, rich, and had the same gentle gravitas of that instrument. It seemed a fitting tribute.

Occasionally a colleague will borrow the instrument at a festival or in a song-circle and look up at me immediately with wonder and delight. I can see that they too are feeling the magic. It is a stunning instrument. I have written many of my finest songs on that guitar, and it has seen me through more hours of practice, stage time, road time, studio sessions, and personal meditation than I can recount. If that instrument could talk, it would tell you very different stories than the others. It has been the primary instrument of my professional life.

The Brazilian Rosewood Taylors are still in my Studio, but Brazilian Rosewood being an endangered species, is now "unobtainium." So, my Taylors mostly stay home these days, and deserve to be played more than they are. I still have the Washburns, and a dozen other instruments that I have acquired over the years. None of them get the attention and time that they deserve. But I try. They all got a serious bit of TLC a few summers ago when I made sure they each got spruced up (so to speak), frets cleaned, new strings, buff and shine all around, and they all got played for

a while. Among the most treasured and least played for me is the 1921 Gibson A-2 mandolin. If that instrument could tell me some of the stories it has to share? Some of the history it has seen in the last century? That would be something!

I hold sadness for the instruments that I loved and released. Especially the Applause 12-String. I traded it for the Craviola, and then lost the Craviola and a hand-built dreadnaught when a repair man skipped town and took my axes with, leaving no trail to follow. A real trick in the digital age. They were not worth a lot, and I still have the memories and many other marvelous instruments as consolation. And I remain a person blessed with a conspicuous abundance of glorious instruments. I have not even started on the remarkable acoustic and electric Bouzoukis made for me by Bayard Blain, or the "Wisdom Tree" that belonged to Mark Spittal, or the Ron Belanger from Ontario, or the Cedar flute. I'll save those stories for Part 2.

I think about what stories my instruments would tell to others, given the chance. And I wonder what stories they would tell to me, if I listened hard enough. And then I remember that I CAN listen. I CAN hear them speak. The songs that come through each instrument feel like they are permanently a part of that instrument and forever joined. I can play my song St. Christopher on any guitar, but it always sounds best to me on the Taylor dreadnaught. I can play Let It Rain on another instrument, but it still sounds best on the Goodall. Lady of The Harbor still sounds truest to me on the acoustic bouzouki. But at the end of the day, it is the song - and my relationship with these instruments that matters most. Good stories will emerge from any instrument, and it is still on me to meditate with my instrumental "friends" and bother to listen to what they have to say. Every instrument is just waiting to tell us stories. Each one contains unlimited potential - waiting to be tapped by our loving attention, imagination, and the opening of our hearts to joy, wonder, sorrow, loss, and our deepest dreaming. Just sitting with the instrument - without agenda - will usually lead to some new melodic idea, lyric turn of phrase, or fresh chord voicing. All I have to do is remember to sit still, and to spend time with the instruments long enough for them to have their say. If I listen, they will speak.

What are your instruments waiting to tell you?

~ Joe Jencks (1-20-22)

THE FIRE I SAW - JENNY PARROTT
2021 - PARKING LOT PANIC ATTACK RECORDS



Review by Kiki Schueler

Jenny Parrott’s three records with country swing band The Shotgun Party in the aughts and a pair with indie folk duo Loves It! in 2010 and ’13 gave little indication of the formidable weapon her voice is. In the instantly crushable Shotgun Party her Betty Boop vocals were balanced by Katie Rose Cox’s significant fiddle chops. With Loves It! she added a lower octave to her range to match bandmate Vaughn Walters’ more traditional voice. It wasn’t until her first solo release When I Come Down that she began reveal everything she’d been holding back. That record’s opener “Daughter” led to “who’s that girl?” double takes from those familiar with her earlier work. The November release of The Fire I Saw went through all the pandemic hoops that have become the norm for independent artists. The original release was planned for 2020, but well, we all know what happened there. Parrott had planned to bring a multitude of her Austin musician friends into the home studio to flesh out the songs. Instead, she pared the track list down to those that felt the most finished, and used her synths for finishing touches. The result is a record that, while only numbering eight and barely breaking the twenty-minute mark, doesn’t feel half-baked.

The record’s shortest tracks, both

coming in under two minutes, disguise their complexity with ease. The keyboard and vocal reflection “My Hero” is as worshipful as it is anguished. A primal burst at the halfway mark feels impassioned and uncalculated. Meanwhile, the a cappella duet “July” will transport you to a sweltering evening on the porch somewhere in a sepia-colored past. “Hallelujah” thrusts you forward, it’s space-y synths swirling like an aggressive musical Aurora Borealis.

One of two singles released in advance, “I Thought” reflects on a tendency to overlook the warning signs in people, and to be drawn into abusive relationships. “I thought you looked good to me, I thought,” she sings before admitting, “but I was dreaming.” There is a pensive wistfulness in her voice that’s reflected in wavering guitar and a heartbeat of cymbal crashes, courtesy of Munkh-Orgil Turbold and Daniel Jones respectively. Its entrancing DIY video was filmed in the bathroom at the Hole in the Wall in Austin, where Parrott has a weekly Friday happy hour residency, and runs the gamut of emotion. It echoes the message that making mistakes is what makes us human. The other, “Georgica,” was written for the daughter of a childhood friend. While she admits they aren’t that close anymore, the song muses on universal themes of motherhood, for instance, the futures you imagine for your offspring. “I wonder what you’ll do, will you sing fa la la la in the opera, or will you collect scientific samples on the moon?” The positive, “you can do anything,” message is one that should be imparted to all children. The title track, parenthetically titled “Is There Anyone

to Meet Me?,” bursts with the near-magical positivity that seems to infuse everything Parrott does. And we could all use a little positivity these days.

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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Peter Berryman

Walloping Window Blind

*Oh some folks think that a fellow's tie
Should be lavender, cream, or mauve
But the ties I wear should possess the glare
Of a red-hot kitchen stove
Oh the life I lead and the books I read
Are sensible, sane, and mild;
I don't wear spats and I like calm hats
But I like my neckties wild.*

I asked my brother and sisters if they remember my folks singing the song **Walloping Window Blind**. Jeff, the oldest, said yes, absolutely. I'm next in line and I THINK I remember them singing it. Next comes Mary, who doesn't remember ever hearing the song anywhere. Then Susannah, the youngest, knows the song but remembers Dad singing the above alternate lyrics to the song's melody.

The **Walloping Window Blind** begins as a marvelous piece of novelty writing, in my opinion. The title refers to a square-rigged sailing ship and you can sure see how those resemble venetian blinds. Here's how the first verse goes:

*A capital ship for an ocean trip
Was **The Walloping Window-blind**;
No gale that blew dismayed her crew
Or troubled the captain's mind.
The man at the wheel was taught to feel
Contempt for the wildest blow,
And it often appeared, when the weather
had cleared,
That he'd been in his bunk below.*

Originally written as a six-stanza poem, this lyric appeared in an 1884 children's book called **Davy and the Goblin**, with the subtitle "**What Followed Reading 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**," by Charles E. Carryl (1841-1920). Being now far and away into the Public Domain, the book is available free from **Project Gutenberg**.

Thanks to unknown contributors over the years, the song has taken on a number of optional characteristics. For one thing, usually only the first two or sometimes three verses are sung of the original six. I think this is because of the quality of the writ-

ing gradually deteriorates, and also, as my sister Mary pointed out when I sent her the original lyrics, the song ends with an oddly racist twist that I hadn't noticed. The song is about a voyage, and in the end, the ship is grounded and the crew stranded. A Chinese junk happens by, and apparently the crew commandeers the junk and leaves the Chinese crew on the island to live on tree bark: "*And we left the crew of the junk to chew / The bark of the rubagub tree.*" One folk-process substitution I have found for those two unfortunate lines is: "*We plotted our course for the land of blue horse / Due west 'cross the peppermint sea.*" Sounds like a Beatles ending. Much nicer.

But I think the first couple verses are wonderful as they stand. To begin with, the name **Walloping Window Blind** I have always loved. Though some illustrations of this song picture a ship with sails that resemble window SHADES, the cheap kind you pull down from a spring-loaded roller, I've always pictured "Venetian" BLINDS, which do look like the multiple sails on the old square-riggers. And the word "walloping" is perfect, not only because of the alliteration (Walloping Window) but because of the two meanings of the word both being applicable. According to the Google dictionary, "walloping" can mean, as a noun, "a beating," or as an adjective, "large and powerful." So **Walloping Window Blind** gives the picture of a large and powerful Venetian blind beating back and forth, which is very close to what a full-rigged sailing ship would look like in a stiff wind. And incidentally, I did Google "Venetian blind" to make sure they were available in 1884.

But also in these beginning verses, the words are arranged in a way that lets them sparkle and flow while being easily sung and understood. One way this is accomplished is by almost never using a word that begins with the same sound as the word before it ends, like "big green" or "three eagles." And the visual imagery of the action is funny and easily pictured. The internal rhymes in lines 3, 5, and 7 of each verse are so skillfully written as to seem almost accidental.

Though many folks mistakenly associate this lyric with Gilbert and Sullivan, Edward Lear, or Lewis Carroll himself, the part-time children's author was actually a stock broker on the New York Stock Exchange from 1874 until 1908, so he was there for

sure when writing this song, like Einstein at the patent office doing his creative work on the side.

The poem has taken on some changes over the years, the most notable being the adoption of the melody for the traditional song **Ten Thousand Miles Away**, and in fact, frequently, the entire chorus for that song. Some sources even name **Walloping...** as a PARODY of **Ten Thousand Miles Away**. Here's the chorus:

*So blow the winds, heigh-ho
A roving I will go
I'll stay no more on England's shore
So let the music play!
I'll start by the morning train
To cross the raging main
For I'm on the move to my own true love,
Ten thousand miles away.*

The last line is often sung as: *I'm off to my love with a boxing glove ten thousand miles away.*

Anyway, the **Walloping Window Blind** is an interesting song with an interesting history. There are many performances of the song on YouTube, including that of Natalie Merchant, with an altogether new melody. She leaves off the above chorus and sings the lyrics pretty much as originally written. Then there's a wild performance by Glenda Jackson and the Muppet "Pirates." They sing only the first two verses, but add the 10,000 miles chorus after each verse. Debra Cowan does the same: the first 2 verses with choruses. She also ADDS two new verses at the beginning. Many other performances are out there; go to YouTube and search for "A Capital Ship" or "Walloping Window Blind." And if anybody knows other verses to **I Like My Neckties Wild**, please let me know.

Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_E._Carryl

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Thousand_Miles_Away

http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/Capital_Ship.htm (original Carryl poem)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>

<https://youtu.be/JDZr8q1EgN4> (Natalie Merchant)

<https://youtu.be/JDZr8q1EgN4> (Jackson, Muppets)

<https://youtu.be/2jof-RtQZ6I> (Debra Cowan)

"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!

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WVMO-FM - An Award Winning Station

WVMO is a low power, 100 watt radio station located in Monona. While there are several low power stations in the area, most have a limited format and/or on-the-air time. With support from the city of Monona, this station was developed over a nine year period by recognized experts in the broadcast industry. There was a contest held to name the station and WVMO was the winner, meaning "The Voice of Monona" as it is now known. Run by volunteers, the station has an Americana base for music as well as special programs throughout it's 24/7 operation. It also touts 48 local musicians each day.

Station breaks, jingles and other announcements are done by community residents including young kids. If you think that sounds unprofessional, you've got to listen for a few days. Professional sounding with a local flare is the goal. Now in its 7th year, WVMO has

twice been named "Large Market Station of the Year" by the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association. In 2021, WVMO was one of the category sponsors at the MAMA awards. It has also been called "The Coolest Little Station in the Nation."

While broadcasting out of Monona, over the air reach (98.7FM) is to Madison's east side, near west side and near sides of Cottage Grove, McFarland and Middleton. WVMO can also be heard streaming on your devices and through the Tune in Radio app. The station studio is in the city hall building with its antenna on the fire department hose drying tower.

As mentioned, this is a volunteer run station and help is always needed. The Friends of WVMO was set up to help support the station. The mission of the Friends of WVMO is to

promote and improve WVMO. Our by-laws state: "The purpose of this non-profit charitable organization shall be to promote and improve the Monona community and by extension that of Madison's Eastside; to stimulate gifts and bequests to WVMO; to provide volunteer support in strengthening WVMO."

We are actively looking for more people to get involved and potentially serve on the board of directors. If you might be interested in getting involved (time is minimal) or finding out how you might contribute to improving WVMO, please contact current Friends of WVMO President, Mark Johanneck at mdj53714@gmail.com.

Take a listen. You just might get hooked.