

Mad Folk News

Viva Lost Vegas!

By Emily Beebe

Imagine sitting on the porch of a narrow wooden house in the Smokey Mountains, playing an old Carter Family hymn on a Saturday evening. The September wind picks up and starts whistling through the laurels off Hawk Mountain, taking with it a vortex of leaves, a couple of buzzards and all trace of the melody coming out of your bowl back mandolin. The fiddler doesn't notice a thing and continues sawing away. The banjo player is filled with the spirit by now and starts singing four keys higher than he ought to. The buzzards bank and circle back to discover what died. About this time, your great aunt comes out with a blueberry cobbler. She is wearing her old church shoes, fortified with a selection of roofing nails driven into the sturdy soles. When she begins to prance around on the plywood like a rabbit in a hail storm, you lay down your instrument and soothe your frustration by excavating dessert right out of the cast iron skillet.

Near the turn of the twentieth century in America, old time musical entertainment wasn't always a calculated affair. Most towns didn't have an opera house or theater featuring live concerts every weekend. Folks did what they could for fun, and often it involved playing Pappy's old German violin or perhaps an Italian concertina found at a pawn shop. Still, parlor music was popular, and instrument companies were ready to establish names for themselves. Before long musical instrument companies were competing for the small town dollar.

By the 1910s, community plucked-string

orchestras were tuning up all over America to the delight of the instrument makers' marketing departments, who were diligently plastering newspapers and outhouse Sears catalogs with ads for Vega Tubaphone banjos, Gibson A-1 mandolins, and Martin parlor guitars. No longer just a vehicle for Harold Hill and his seventy six trombones, small and large towns alike were opting to pick-a-little talk-a-little using modest stringed instruments like the mandolin. The craze was in part fed by the recent popularity of mandolin ensembles in Europe playing from the expansive Italian mandolin music repertoire. Vaudeville, circuses, and other travelling shows also highlighted the fun that could be had with stringed instruments, no longer suited only for the ballroom, but now also for the big top.



The Vega Instrument company in Boston was well positioned for this new trend, producing a quality line of cylinder-back mandolins, mandolas, guitars, and banjos. In 2018, to honor these instruments and the colorful vintage music of the mandolin orchestras, Paul Rupp conceived of the Wisconsin/Vega Project. This project was recorded and performed by tal-

ented musicians from the Milwaukee Mandolin Orchestra and other professional musicians from a variety of musical backgrounds, including none other than David 'Dawg' Grisman, one of the most innovative and influential mandolinists of the twentieth century. This delightful and unusual recording brings together the uplifting spirit of the classic mandolin orchestra, the warm daguerreotype tone of Vega cylinder-back mandolins and their cousins, and the festive sound of vintage popular and classical music with deep Wisconsin ties. Some of these pieces may take one back to childhood trips to see the Barnum and Bailey circus, nostrils flaring with the smell of roasting peanuts, hair sticky with cotton candy.



The Milwaukee Mandolin Orchestra standing the test of time. Members are shown here in 1923 and in 2018

Column continued from previous page

The Milwaukee Mandolin Orchestra has been performing since 1900 and is the oldest continually operating mandolin orchestra in the world. They perform a lively repertoire of light classics and popular music written a hundred years ago for the mandolin, mandola, mandocello, guitar, and mando-bass. Over the years, this ensemble has enhanced their repertoire with other instruments such as vocals, reeds, woodwinds, piano, and percussion and plays a full spectrum of mandolin musical arrangements.

In the spirit of the old community ensembles, the Milwaukee Mandolin Orchestra is welcoming of new members, with few require-

ments beyond loving string music, being able to play a mandolin, guitar, or violin proficiently, and being able to read music. The group has played in a panoply of venues including Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and Ravinia in Highland Park. One year they actually played atop a bandwagon in the Great Circus Parade, and they headlined a mandolinists' convention in Bozeman, Montana. The MMO has also played in Venice, Italy, Tokyo, Japan, and Lake Wobegon, Minnesota. Tough audiences, left satisfied.

There may come the emotional day when you find yourself tasked with cleaning out your great aunt's storage unit. If you are fortunate, you may find an antique teardrop mandolin

and some yellowed sheet music for the Victoria March and the Dill Pickles Rag. Though the past may be gone it is definitely not dead, so honor your ancestors, wipe your weeping eyes, and tie up the dusty laces of those old church shoes to show your kids and grandkids what it looks like to have a good time. And don't forget the big bag of circus peanuts.

Discography:

The Wisconsin/Vega Project, The New Vintage Frets and Friends, 2018, Rupp Enterprises.

Gandy Dancer Bluegrass Festival on August 20th

By Kenny MacMillan

Festival Committee Chair/Creative Director

Come on down to Mazomanie Saturday, August 20th for the Gandy Dancer Bluegrass Festival! Held downtown Mazo on the Westland Promenade, this one-day festival is the best value in Bluegrass music. For \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the gate you'll have a full day of incredible local, regional, and national touring bands. Best of all, admission to the rest of the festival is FREE, and offers tons of activities for kids and families.

This year our music lineup is:

7pm – The Po' Ramblin' Boys – East Tennessee Bluegrass straight from the Smoky Mountains. 2019 Grammy Nominee for Best Bluegrass Album, Grand Ole Opry members.

5pm – Liam Purcell & Cane Mill Road – Most requested band to return, so we listened to our fans and they're back! Named Momentum Band of the Year by IBMA in 2019, they're one of the fastest growing bands in the industry.

For all you Bluegrass musicians out there – don't miss the opportunity to jam with Liam Purcell from 3:30-5pm.

It's not every day you get to jam with a Billboard Top 10 Bluegrass artist!

3pm – Monroe Crossing – Named in honor of Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass Music, Monroe Crossing's superb musicianship and on-stage rapport have entertained audiences throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

1pm – Fox Crossing String Band – This all-female bluegrass group from Chicago has been winning hearts with their beautiful harmonies, original songwriting, and entertaining stage presence ever since forming in November 2016.

11am – Soggy Prairie – Multi-time winners in 'Best of Madison' for Bluegrass, Sun Prairie based Soggy Prairie is the perfect way to kick off the day.

Our free children's activities continue to grow each year thanks to our collaboration with the Black Earth Children's Museum. This year they'll have their kids craft and play area, face painting and balloon artists, plus children's folk musician Ken Lonquist 12pm, followed by a train song sing-

along at 2pm.

If you're a train enthusiast (young or old), then you'll be excited to hear that S-Gauge Wisconsin will be returning this year with their interactive model train display! And as always, Cross Plains Lions Club will feature their mini-train and give train rides around downtown Mazo.

Local food vendors will be serving delicious meals and desserts all day. If you're thirsty we'll have the Potosi Rolling Bar serving the best of their brews (and root beer).

Finally, to top it all off we've added the Mazo Market (farmers market).

The Gandy Dancer Bluegrass Festival is always excited to share what makes our communities so great. Come and find out for yourself on Saturday, August 20th. For more information visit gandydancerfestival.org, or find us on Facebook and Instagram.



Review by Kiki Schueler

Chastity Brown's *Sing to the Walls* just might be the most appropriately titled record to come out of the pandemic. However, unlike so many introspective, home-studio releases of the last couple years, it doesn't sound like a socially distanced one. The ten songs on *Walls*, selected from the more than 100 she's written since 2017's *Silhouette of Sirens*, are bigger than that. Much of that expansiveness comes from her singular voice, which can make every repetition of word mean something different. The Tennessee raised singer-songwriter grew up singing in church, learning multiple instruments, and writing songs that combined folk, R & B and jazz. A move to Minneapolis in 2006 introduced her to the Twin Cities folk scene, and eventually led to her signing with the St Paul based Red House Records prior to *Sirens*. Not only does Brown refuse to be contained or categorized, she also will not be brought down. With so much to be angry about, there is a surprising amount of hope here.

Including a song titled just that. "Hope" is the first days of a new love, when desire is weighed against not getting burned again. "But I hold back, in hopes that what I feel now won't fold like it did in the past." A graceful piano melody buoys its theme of resilience. Opening track

"Wonderment" exists in the equally magical space between dreaming and wakefulness. Layers of echoey vocals reinforce the feeling as she sings "And all around my head, I could not grasp, take ahold of anything. Seemed like letting go was the only way." Then the drums kick in and she opens up with an intensity that makes you catch your breath. The effervescent "Like the Sun" continues both themes. "Woke up from a crazy dream last night, you were in my arms sleeping by my side," proclaims its opening line. The chorus, "You're like the sun" repeated like a mantra, warms like the most complimentary of similes.

That is not to say the record is without friction. On what would be the first song on side 2, "Golden" sees her finally letting loose. "So, why have I got to be angry?" she asks rhetorically, before getting right to the point, "Does this black woman voice have too much power for ya? Would it go down sweetly if I sang softer?" It ranks as one of the record's strongest tracks, trumped only by the propulsively addictive "Back Seat." Like the offspring of John Mellencamp's "Cherry Bomb" and Tracey Chapman's "Fast Car," it manages both nostalgic innocence and gritty reality, while invoking the pure joy of driving in the country with the windows down. And like Adele's stylistically similar "Rolling in the Deep," it's a song that sticks with you. Instantly familiar and patently undeniable.

The record closes with the minimalist "Gertrude," which continues her penchant for concise titles. (Half are one word only, with the title song ranking as the

wordiest. I'm a big fan of such brevity.) A graceful string arrangement—the viola in particular stands out—and a simple one-handed keyboard melody are paired with a bird song so faithfully sampled my Merlin app could identify it. The familiar song of the ubiquitous red-eyed vireo sounds like summer in the Midwest, and makes for an interesting contrast to a unique voice.

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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The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

August 2022

Gigs

Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Kiki at righteousmusicgmt@gmail.com

- Saturday, August 6th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Micha Schnabel & Vanessa Jean Speckman - \$15
- Sunday, August 14th @ 3pm (doors at 2) AND @6pm (doors at 5) Robbie Fulks & Don Stiernberg- \$20
- Kiki's Fourth Righteous Session @McPike Park Friday, August 19th - The Low Czars, Split Single and Aaron Lee Tasjan

Our House

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Dave & Anne at annedave@chorus.net - 608-256-2958 or 335-7909

- Saturday, August 13th @ 6:30 pm - Danni Nicholls - \$20
- Friday, September 9th @ 6:30 pm - Willy Porter - \$20
- Thursday, October 13th @ 7 pm - Martyn Joseph - \$20

Common Chord

- Sunday, August 21st - Paoli Mill Park - 6890 Paoli Road, Paoli <http://thehopgarden.net/> and <http://paolimillpark.com/>
- Monday, August 29th @5pm - "Music Mondays" @ Good Shepherd Luthern Church 5701 Raymond Rd, Madison - www.gslcwi.com
- Saturday, October 15th @7:30pm - Portage Center for the Arts 301 E Cook St, Portage - www.portagecenterforthearts.com

Gandy Dancer Bluegrass Festival

- Saturday, August 20th - Westland Promenade, Mazomanie, WI \$15 in adv
Music begins at 11am (gates open at 10:30)
Detailed list of performers and activities at gandydancerfestival.org

Venues

FOLKLORE VILLAGE

Folklore Village

3210 Cty Hwy BB
Dodgeville, WI
folklorevillage.org
608-924-4000

- Tue, Aug 2nd - Virtual Open Mic - @7pm
- Fri-Sun, Aug 12-14 - Folk School Session 3
- Tue, Aug 16th - Open Mic, Live at Folklore Village! - @7pm
- Sat, Aug 27th - Patty & Craig In Concert - \$15 - @7pm (doors at 6:30)
- Tue, Sept 6th - Virtual Open Mic - @7pm



18 S. Water St.
Ft. Atkinson, WI
cafecarpe.com
920-563-9391

Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise.
Please call 920-563-9391 to reserve.

- Wed, Aug 3rd, Carrie Elkin & Danny Schmidt - \$18 - @8pm
- Thu, Aug 4th, Dance Around Molly - \$15 - @7:30pm
- Sat, Aug 6th, John Sieger / Dave Ramont / Bill Camplin - \$12
- Wed, Aug 10th, Megan Slankard / Rachel Kilgour - \$20 - @8pm
- Fri, Aug 12th, Jackie Bristow - \$20
- Wed, Aug 24th, Sofia Talvik - \$15 - @7:30pm
- Sat, Aug 27th, Krause Family Band - @8pm

NORTH STREET CABARET

610 North St, Madison, WI
northstreetcabaret.com

Sugar Maple Music Festival

- Friday, September 23rd - Jake Blount - @7pm - \$22-\$28

Misc

Old Time Jam

Monthly - 3rd Sunday of every month, 4 to 6pm

EVP West 3809 Mineral Point Road

Coodinator: Al Wilson

cell: 608-572-0634

adwilson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

Madison Area Ukulele Initiative -- Singalongs 3rd Sunday 11am - 1:30pm
- for location visit www.MAUImadison.com

On the Air



wpr.org

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.



wortfm.org

WORT 89.9 FM community radio

- 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 - Green Morning Radio w/ Brian Hirsh
- 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



98.7 FM - THE VOICE OF MONONA

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

Stuart Stotts

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

"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

Complete, clip, and mail this form

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Senior / Student \$10 _____

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