

Mad Folk News

Band Gives Birth After 40 Year Gestation!

Beat-Reporter KEN LONNQUIST

In 1983, local folkies **Pete Burns, Doug Brown and Ken Lonquist** recruited their young friend **Dave Adler** to join them in working up a set of Clancy Brothers and other traditional Irish Pub songs for a St. Patrick's Day show. There were two bottles on the kitchen table they'd gathered around to rehearse. One was Bailey's Irish Cream. The other was O'Darby Irish Cream Liqueur.

"What'll we call the band?" one asked. Waving a finger between the two bottles, a vote was taken.

Four decades on, **O'DARBY** is releasing its first studio recording - 14 tracks, twelve of them originals. The band will celebrate with an album-release event scheduled for **Sunday, May 21 at The Harmony Bar** - a stone's throw from the kitchen table where the band chose its name. They'll play three sets from **4 pm - 7 pm**.

Lonquist is best known for his songs about Wisconsin, environmental issues, topical humor, and children's themes. Brown is a sought-after lead guitarist, banjo player and fiddler in jazz, folk, rock and musical theater realms. Pete's a steadfast writer of beautiful songs, and Esperé divides his time between swing-era vocal trio *The Zippity Doo-Dahs* and long-distance session work with a California-based studio.

O'DARBY has been a beloved side-project, with the band playing year

'round at clubs and performing venues, festivals, weddings, and yes, even wakes! All four sing, and the harmony they create is always a concert highlight.

Lonquist's 8th grade history teacher Regis O'Shaughnessy - who adopted him as a "grandson" - made a point of furthering his ancestral Irish connections by purchasing albums and songbooks for him on her yearly pilgrimages to the Emerald Isle. Those records and songbooks, plus the band's appreciation of the Appleton-based Gilmour Brothers trio, drew them together in harmony back in 1983.

The eponymously titled album will be available at the show as a limited-edition CD, and on flash-drive as well.

Special musical guests will include **Chris Wag-oner** - "the 5th O'DARBY" - who contributes man-

dolin and fiddle on the album, and singer **Emily Whalley**.

If you can't make the show, you can order the album through the band's website: www.odarbyirishfolkband.com or by emailing ken@kenland.com.

It's taken 40 years, but look! It's a beautiful baby!



There are Norwegians in Stoughton, Still

By Emily Beebe

Feeling motivated, we join the line's source at McGlynn's pharmacy. After spending the next 30 minutes watching the slower runners lurch up Main Street, we are carried like cows in a tractor beam toward the Cream Puff truck. By now, the pecan pie from the Friends of the Library bake sale was wearing off, and it was rumored that the 4-H youth were selling a square meal consisting of an order of fried cheese curds with each deluxe cream puff.

There was just enough time to fast-waddle toward the Community Gym and find a seat in the bleachers, wiping the grease from our chins and powdered sugar from our pants. This was the last performance of the high school's Stoughton Norwegian Dancers before the seniors sashayed off to St. Olaf or the University of Minnesota in the fall. How nostalgic to see those youngsters shushing their feet along the wood floor, wagging their fingers in each other's faces, and performing a series of hat tricks and slightly nauseating back flips dressed in costumes representing Norway's many folkloric districts. The dances were exactly as they were when the troupe was first founded in the early years of the post-war international folk-dance craze in America. The Norwegians Dancers are Stoughton's good-will ambassadors, and a living, prancing museum of costume, dance, and melody that is kept free-of-dust with a fresh crop of talented dancers and musicians each fall.

The Norwegian dancers got their start in 1953 when Jeanne Reek, a gym teacher at Stoughton High School was asked to arrange a dance performance at the 2nd annual Stoughton Syttende Mai festival. This festival is now one of the world's largest celebrations of Norwegian independence, held in the little Wisconsin town that at one point claimed 90% Norwegian heritage. Jeanne Reek was not of Norwegian ancestry but was motivational and dedicated to both the students and her role in the district. The program continued to the delight of the community, and Jeanne continually looked for ways

to make the show a little better. In the summer of 1964, she traveled to Norway and spent seven weeks collecting traditional Norwegian dance choreography and folk songs as well as learning about the bunad, the National folk dress costume.

On her return, the hard-working Norwegian community got busy sewing the girls' bunads and the boys' costumes, and Jeanne started teaching the high schoolers the dances and songs. In the early days, the music was all played on accordions, still a popular mainstream instrument in Wisconsin. A place in the Dancers troupe is such a coveted position that to this day, these teenagers practice their art starting at the unholy hour of 6:55 am each school day. Nowadays the accordions are replaced by keyboards, and this year's musicians also include hardanger fiddlers. The beautifully carved 'hardingfele' is the national instrument of Norway and is played like a regular fiddle but has 4 or 5 additional resonating strings that aren't bowed. (Like 'mandolin' in Italian, 'hardingfele' means impossible-to-keep-in-tune in Norwegian). The dancers perform all over the world and have been warmly welcomed in Norway on several occasions.

On the sidewalk outside the Norwegian Dancers' beautiful display, the wind and rain of folk evolution has started to uproot the once prevalent social dance traditions of the Scandinavian Americans. Around the turn of the new century, the Goose Island Ramblers, an influential and long-lived Madison 'Scandihoovian' band, played at a Saturday evening street dance as part of the Syttende Mai festival. Chris and I were the first ones to get up to dance and were eventually joined by a few more elderly couples to waltz, polka, hambo, polska, and schottische. In the last few years, the festival beer garden was revived (controversial!) which also hosted live music by local folk artists. An ensemble led by Milwaukee-based fiddler and ethnomusicologist Jason Busniewski performed authentic dance music from the Upper Midwest in 2022, much of which has a strong Scandinavian influence. Chris and I were the

sole dancers. It was sadly apparent to us that these old social dances are all but forgotten in Stoughton, even as the Norwegian Dancers still attract crowds.

Luckily, Jason is not alone in keeping Scandinavian American dance music from being locked up in the archives. Beth Hoven Rotto, a Decorah-based fiddler and collector of upper Midwest dance music, started the Scandinavian-American Old Time Dance Music Ensemble in 2022 during an artist residency at UW-Madison's Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures. This group attracted many old-time, traditional, and dance musicians from the region who enthusiastically studied and then performed this music for several dances at UW-Madison. Although Beth Rotto's residency has ended, the ensemble is still going strong and will be performing at the 2023 Stoughton Syttende Mai festival. We are optimistic that the Scandi-Am music revival will get a few more couples – and a whole bunch of kids - on the dance floor in Stoughton this year.

If you go... the 2023 Stoughton Syttende Mai festival is May 19-May 21. The Scandinavian American Dance Old-Time Dance Music Ensemble performs at 2 pm Saturday, May 20 at the Stoughton Opera House.

My Highway Home

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The Interconnectedness of Creativity

In addition to my multifaceted life as a touring musician, a songwriter, a singer and cultural worker, I am also an avid fan of cooking, Lego, model trains, and making art with hand-made paper. I am a student of the natural world and a devotee of the healing power of a good hike, bicycle ride, or camping trip. Time in nature is restorative to me in ways that are never predictable, but consistently rewarding.

Equally so, immersing myself in any of my hobbies, engages creativity in new ways. It may not seem like time spent on one activity directly correlated to productivity in another. How could building something with Lego lead to a new song lyric? But there is beauty and methodology in creative chaos. Most people would probably look at my life and see the chaos before they noticed the order. I could claim some point of erudition or eccentricity in this matter, but it would be nothing more than sophistry. The truth is, my life is a mess. One great big, beautiful, chaotic, creative mess.

I love making a mess of the kitchen. Edible alchemy is real. Something that did not previously exist is being made from whatever ingredients are at hand. Baking has never been my thing. There's more chemistry involved, and therefore more rules. But cooking for me is an improvisational art form, it is culinary Jazz. It is a present-time practice that requires my attention to be in the moment. In this way it is also a meditative spiritual practice. Cooking is centering and grounding, and almost always allows me to release something my mind or heart has been stuck on.

But while I cook, I am unconsciously whistling to myself or humming some fragment of melody. That almost always leads to other thoughts about the world, and sometimes even solutions to other problems. Not immediately, mind you. But the next time I sit down to do a thing I have been avoiding, I find I have renewed focus and a capacity to see varied pathways through the proverbial thicket.

Creativity begets creativity.

I have worked on song lyrics while swimming laps, riding my bike, or hiking in the woods. It is not a conscious effort sometimes – but rather more like a screen-saver that is in a perpetual state of proactive creative process. Sometimes, letting a creative thought live on the back-burner while I am doing other things is the right approach. Sometimes, I have simply given a particular problem all I have to give it for one sitting. But my brain keeps chewing on

the notion unconsciously, and when I sit down next to re-think a set of lyrics, the answer to the word-puzzle is right there. Marvelous.

My time with Lego, observing some novel and innovative means by which one might solve a dimensional problem, frequently adds to my willingness to look at another problem in a different area of my life. And to see it with greater dimension, clarity, and frequently alternative solutions.

I set up a double oval of HO scale train track on the floor in my living room. I model mostly Canadian railroads (an homage to my Quebecoise roots). I don't have a space suited for building a layout presently. But 14 months ago, I laid my Yoga mat out on the floor in the living room and figured out how wide the loops of track needed to be for me to do my practice in the center of the room and not disturb the trains. When I am home, I do various practices inside that circle of brightly colored Canadian trains; one moving clockwise and the other counter clockwise. I always run them at slow speeds. And some days, especially in the winter, the gentle movement of all that color around me is both relaxing and uplifting. I practice sitting meditation in the center of that circle. And the trains keep my attention in the present moment with colorful diversity and the gentle sound of steel wheels on the rails.

It is an archetypal sound for a Folksinger, the wheels on the rails. The sound of the hobos, the workers, the builders, the farmers, the miners, and the mechanics. It is the sound of imagination and hope. It is the sound of possibility. Somewhere out there is a town I want to visit, people I want to meet, natural splendor I wish to behold. And the sound of the wheels on the rails invites that imagining.

Maya Angelou said once, "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."

I totally agree. It is not just an idea, but a lived experience. So sound is this notion, that many educational models are based on the interconnectedness of diverse creative processes. Orff, Kodály, and Montessori are all engaged educational practices based on an awareness of the interconnectedness of ALL creative process.

Delightfully, this is the way with love as well. The more we love, the more we are able to love. And just as creativity begets creativity, goodwill begets goodwill. Kindness, begets kindness. Joy begets joy, and hope begets hope. And we

all need that hope.

So, when you find yourself doing one activity and your mind starts to wander, consider the possibility that your own creative process is asserting itself. I mean if you are driving, flying a plane, performing surgery, or working with sharp objects – maybe the practice needs to be about returning your mind to the present moment, and swiftly. But most of the time, it is OK to let your mind wander a bit. A creative solution to some other problem may be just over the horizon. I can't tell you how many times I found a missing word for a song in an unexpected place. As the saying goes, "Not all who wander are lost." And not every diversion is a distraction. Sometimes it's just a pathway into a new idea.

I have a "To Do" list that is 48 pages long, at 12 pt. font. My inability to ever get to the bottom of this list vexes me at times. I just keep adding things to the list. Even as I move things off that list to a "Done" list, more ideas get added on. Dreams, hopes, things I want to do, projects, imminent deadlines, people I want to reach out to; all of that goes on the list. I finally realized that my inability to get to the bottom of the list is not a failure of productivity on my part. Rather, it is the triumph of a blessedly vivid imagination.

As long as we have ideas, we have hope. And as long as we have hope, we will keep solving whatever problems arise with more creativity. If you are feeling stuck, know that "unstuck" is just around the corner, waiting in an unexpected activity, conversation, or place. Keep looking. You may not find exactly what you were looking for, but you will find many wonderful things!

*Joe Jencks is 25-year veteran of the international Folk scene, an award winning songwriter and vocalist, and a contributing writer to numerous publications. For more info on live concerts, tours, broadcasts or Joe's new CD – *The Coming of the Years* - 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



Review by Kiki Schueler

Getting a new Ben de la Cour record is like getting a new collection of short stories from a favorite author. There's something familiar about it, but still surprises wait on every page. Packed with smart lyrics bursting with clever turns of phrase, irresistible melodies, and an orchestra worth of instruments, Sweet Anhedonia, his fifth release, is every bit the equal of 2020's Shadow Land, which I would have bet he couldn't top. I suspect we have the crazy brilliance of producer Jim White to thank for that. White, the genius behind the documentary Searching for the Wrong Eyed Jesus, which explored the connection between country music and Christianity, and a stack of terrific but underappreciated and uncategorizable records, has found a kindred spirit in de la Cour. Both have a soft spot for an underdog, a sweet riff, a surprise twist, and a good murder ballad. White also has a lot of friends, and many of them show up to help on the record.

Opening track "Appalachian Book of the Dead" lets you know the body count here will be just as high as on his previous records. There's "the little boy who drowned back in '63" as well as the "trooper they scraped off the highway side," and who knows what happened to those responsible ("they never found those boys, and I doubt they will"). Haunting violin and vocals (courtesy of Billy Contreras and Luella respectively) dance behind a bluesy guitar as cops drag the river and flood out the holler, which I can't help but think must be the same sad location as the last record's "High

Heels Down the Holler." Equally forsaken is "Maricopa County." Swelling strings lead us down deserted desert roads where two high school girls disappeared ("I can still see those two empty chairs on graduation day"), and poor Hank found "in an arroyo south of town, his mouth all filled with dust and dirt, his hands and both feet bound." As with "Book," those responsible remain unknown, leaving the listener uneasy and looking over their shoulders. The drum roll snare and fluttering trumpet heralding the first single "Shine on the Highway" take a page from Nick Cave's ultimate Murder Ballad "Henry Lee," with the coolest of the Outlaw Country DJs Elizabeth Cook playing the part of PJ Harvey. Surprisingly, while it seems this is a road both "God's Only Son" (Shadow Land) and the serial killer of "Tupelo" (The High Cost of Living Strange) would have traveled, there are no casualties. Well, unless you count those empty bottles of Evan Williams.

Fellow Nashvillian folkie Becky Warren plays the perfect counterpoint to de la Cour in the achingly honest duet "Numbers Game." They have a laundry list of troubles- rent past due, kids sleeping in beds they've long outgrown, waiting on the methadone- but they are proverbial. We know these people, and how they got here. Shoot, we might even be them. If only real life came with lilting acoustic guitar melodies and violin solos. The residents of the piano ballad "Palookaville" include Smoke City Wildcat who "went eighteen rounds with Jumbo Flynn," Buddy Holly who "had the music deep inside long before he ever took that airplane ride," and a mournful trumpet. The moral being that "It's a real short ride from the house on the hill to waking up one morning in Palookaville." It also contains some of his most brilliantly visual imagery, "like a cigar smoking on a windowsill, I can just about hold myself together still." "Birdcage" finds him fully in the land of Mule Variations era Tom Waits. Whispered vocals,

plunky banjo, and a pickaxe rhythm make for a delightfully surreal voyage to the weird, with White having a firm hand on the wheel. On the other hand, songs don't come more straightforward than the spontaneously charismatic "Suicide of Town." It's a sun will come out tomorrow rocker that boasts "ain't no gray skies, just different shades of blue." Just don't wait till tomorrow to pick up Sweet Anhedonia.

I'm delighted to welcome Ben de la Cour and his band to Kiki's Fifth Righteous Session, August 11 at McPike Park.

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.

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The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

May 2023

Mad Folk Events



• See madfolk.org or our facebook page for latest show postings

 **Don't forget!**
Non-perishable donations of food are collected for local food banks at all Mad Folk shows!

Gigs

Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

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

- Saturday, May 6th @ 7pm (doors at 6) Kenny Roby & 6 String Drag Trio - \$15
- Friday, May 12th @ 8pm (doors at 7) The Silos - \$15
- Saturday, May 27th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Will Daily & Gerald Dowd- \$10

Common Chord and Bob's Your Uncle

- Friday June 9 @ 6:30pm: Bob's Your Uncle @ Bullquarian Brewhouse, 1128 17th Ave., Monroe
- Saturday July 29 @ 6pm: Common Chord @ Blue Mounds State Park, 4350 Mounds Park Rd., Blue Mounds
- Tuesday August 8th @ 6pm: Bob's Your Uncle @ Benvenuto's, 2949 Triverton Pike Dr, Fitchburg
- Thursday September 8th @ 6pm: Common Chord @ Gazebo Music, 324 S. Sixth St, Stoughton
- Friday September 9th @ 6pm: Bob's Your Uncle @ Bailey's Run, N8523 Klitzke Rd., New Glarus

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, June 17th @6:30 pm - Ruper Wates - \$20
- Friday, July 7th @6:30 pm - Patchouli - \$20
- Thursday, August 10th @6:30 pm - Joe Crookston - \$20



Wild Hog in the Woods

- Friday, May 5th at 7:30pm - Stairwell Music with special guests The Band Raddish
- Friday, May 12th at 7:30pm - John Duggleby celebrities Mothers' Day
- Friday, May 19th at 7:30pm - Andina and Rich
- Saturday, May 20th at 2pm - Hootenanny!

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

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

Venues



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

Folklore Village

- Tue, May 2nd - Online Open Mic Night
- Sat, May 6th - Maypole social
- Tue, May 9th - In-Person Open Mic Night
- Thur, May 25th - Steam Machine in Concert - \$15 adv. \$20 d.o.s.



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.

- Fri, May 5th, JP CYR & the Ramblin' Kind - @8pm
- Sat, May 6th, Matt Sayles & the Driftless Revelers - \$15 - @8pm
- Sat, May 13th, Poetry Open Mic @ 6pm - Michael Hecht & Bill Camplin @8pm - \$12
- Sun, May 14th, Jeffrey Foucault - \$25 - @7pm
- Fri, May 19th, Tracy Grammer / Wes Collins - \$20
- Sat, May 20th, Lonesome Bill Camplin - \$12 - @8pm
- Thu, May 25th, Song Circle w/ Tricia Alexander - \$5 - @6:30pm
- Fri, May 26th, Karen Johnson - \$10 - @8pm
- Sat, May 27th, Whitney Mann / Paul Otteson - \$15 - @8pm

"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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