

MadFolk News

Claudia Russell at the Brink Aug. 4

by Lou Berryman

♪ MadFolk suspends her regular concert series in the summertime to allow for festivals and other outdoor events, but once in a while we have to suspend THAT suspension!

California singer/songwriter Claudia Russell and her band perform Wednesday, August 4, 7:30pm at the Brink Lounge, 701 E Washington Ave in Madison. The show is presented by Madison Folk Music Society. Tickets are \$14 in advance and \$16 at the door.

Russell is a world-class vocalist, songwriter and guitarist. Accompanied by her band, the Folk Unlimited Orchestra, Russell plays her own brand of Americana/Folk woven from traditional music, pop,

blues, western swing, and county. Her performances are truly heartfelt and entertaining. Using humor, personal stories and her “Who me?” attitude, Claudia quickly bonds with audiences, winning them over with her powerful voice and signature guitar voicings.

Russell has performed at festivals and concert series all around the USA. Though she is based in the San Francisco Bay Area, she is proud to call the Midwest her home away from home. “My family is from Iowa,” she proudly brags. Besides playing concerts from Wisconsin’s Washington Island to Goshen, Indiana, she has logged more than 300 performances as a cast member of Door County’s American Folk-



lore Theater in productions such as Old Friends, Goodnight Irene, Sometimes a Song and Fish and Whistle. She has also as performed at Milwaukee’s

The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel said of her Old Friends performance: “Russell has a voice that was born to

sing folk music. She breaks hearts...”

Russell’s first CD, Song Food, gained airplay on more than 125 stations and earned Claudia Best New Artist honors from WUMB in Boston. Her second CD, Ready To Receive, and her third, Live Band Tonight gained similar airplay as well as press acclaim including rave reviews in Sing Out magazine. Chicago DJ Rich Warren of WFMT wrote:

“Russell is a great live performer. And her band! Let’s just say they’re hot. Plug them into a medium sized city and they’ll light it up.”

Warren has been a big supporter of Russell and has featured Claudia and her band on Folk Stage on their last Midwest tour.

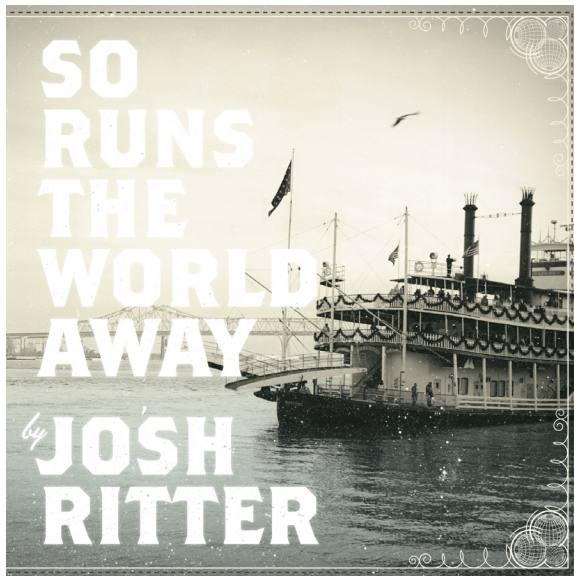
Speaking of the band – the Folk Unlimited Orchestra is rounded out by bassist Mark Petrella and Russell’s husband, guitarist/mandolinist Bruce Kaplan. (Kaplan’s brother Jimmy, a Milwaukee resident, is known to some Midwest audiences as the co-creator of Door County’s American Folklore Theater musical comedies such as Guys on Ice and Lumberjacks in Love.)

Russell is a third generation professional singer. Her father, Val Rosing, was the vocalist on the original million selling 1930s BBC recordings of Teddy Bears Picnic and Try A Little Tenderness. Her grandfather Vladimir Rosing was a famous Russian opera tenor who appeared at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl.

Don’t miss Claudia Russell and the Folk Unlimited – one of the most exciting Americana artists around. Tickets are available online at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/114953> Visit Madfolk.org for more info or call 608-276-8192.

SO RUNS THE WORLD AWAY

JOSH RITTER ~ 2010 PYTHEAS RECORDS



Review by Kiki Schueler

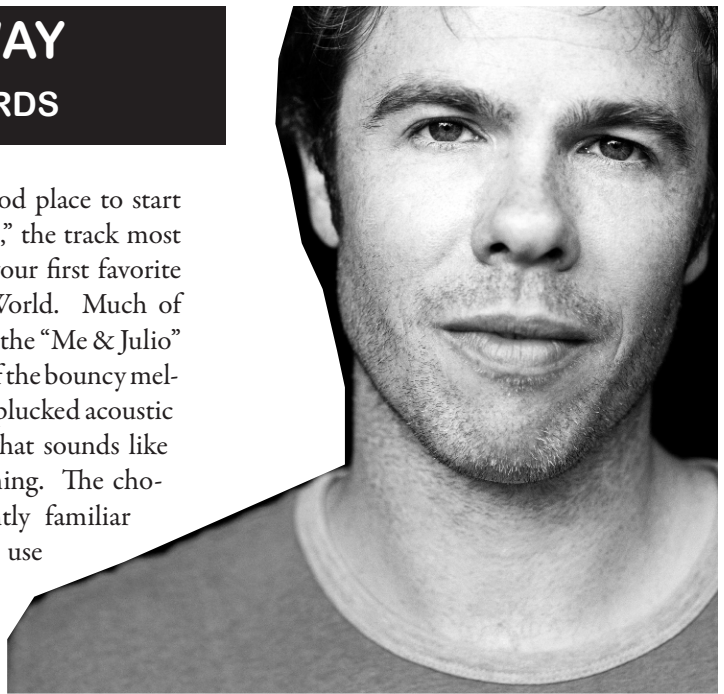
I've never seen anyone have more fun playing a show than Josh Ritter. Wearing an ear-to-ear grin he bounds back and forth across the stage, interacting with the band and the audience equally. Over the course of six full-length albums, there are a number of songs that are particularly inspired live: "Wolves" from *The Animal Years*, "Snow is Gone" from *Hello Starling* and "Next to the Last Romantic" from *The Historical Conquests of Josh Ritter*. Even the more staid "Kathleen," also from *Starling*, is a stunner live. I've been known to be moved to tears during this tale of an unlikely sharing of a moment that will never happen again, not because it's sad, no, simply because it is so amazing. Unfortunately, it's hard to imagine any of the songs from his newest release, *So Runs the World Away*, inspiring that sort of emotion.

It's not that the songs are bad; they're most definitely not. It's just that they all seem so disconnected and impersonal. For a songwriter who always seems to inhabit his songs, these all feel like he's on the outside, observing and commenting instead of feeling and reacting. Ritter fans are used to each release representing a shift from the one before, but this one may require more work than any of his previous ones.

Perhaps a good place to start is with "Lark," the track most likely to be your first favorite song from *World*. Much of that is due to the "Me & Julio" propulsion of the bouncy melody, a gently plucked acoustic guitar and what sounds like hand drumming. The chorus is instantly familiar through the use of repeated words, "I am assured yes, I am assured yes, I am assured peace will come to me. A peace that can yes, surpass the speed yes, of my understanding and my need."

"Folk Bloodbath" is the most curious of these new songs. The tune is taken from the old traditional "Louis Collins," which Ritter learned from Mississippi John Hurt's version, as are much of the chorus and refrains. Anyone familiar with folk music will recognize the characters in this story. Delia, the heroine whose passing has been bemoaned in song by voices ranging from Johnny Cash to Townes Van Zant to Bob Dylan to Dave Alvin, is, according to Ritter, part of a love triangle that also includes Louis Collins and that infamous badass Stackalee (also known as Stagger Lee). Like a Shakespearean tragedy, they all end up dead in this version, "They buried little Delia in the churchyard deep, Louis Collins at her head, Stackalee at her feet."

While those are relatively engaging, it's songs like "The Remnant" and "Rattling Locks" that keep us from getting too personal with the record. Both feature Ritter's electronically altered and strangely monotone voice over complicated instrumentation that somehow doesn't make it more interesting. In addition to his always awesome band, the latter track features backing vocals from Dawn Landes, whom Ritter married in 2009. Perhaps it's just a



coincidence, but the song they performed together the last time I saw Ritter was the only point at which the show lost the momentum that had been building at an alarming rate. It's possible that with time, wordy songs like "Another New World" and "The Curse" will prove themselves, and it's possible that after another hundred listens the light will go on and I will "get" this record. I'll let you know.

MadFolk Concert Tickets

When you see this symbol – ♪ – you'll know that you're reading about a Mad Folk sponsored event. Advance tickets for Mad Folk shows are available online at www.madfolk.org and at these outlets:

- Borders Books East, 2173 Zeier Road
- Borders Books West, 3416 University Ave.
- Orange Tree Imports, 1721 Monroe Street
- Spruce Tree Music, 851 East Johnson

You can also purchase advance tickets by mail. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope with your check payable to Mad Folk, PO Box 665, Madison, WI 53701. If all else fails, call 608-846-9214 for information.

The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

July 2010

Mad Folk Events



Woody Guthrie Night
Fri, 7/23 -- 7:00pm at the Wilmar Center, 953 Jenifer Street

Summer Sing-along w/ Mac Robertson
Fri, 7/16, & 8/20 -- 8pm Blue Mounds State Park Main Shelter

Maxwell Street Days
July 16 - 18 -- State Street at the Overture Center. Check www.madfolk.org for more information.

Claudia Russel & the Folk Unlimited Orchestra
Wed, 8/04 -- at the Brink Lounge -- 7:30pm -- \$14 advance / \$16 day of show

Folk in the Rotunda
Sat, 8/14 -- at the Overture Center -- 11:00am Annie & Rod Capps -- 12:00pm Small Potatoes

Venues



701 E. Washington
thebrinklounge.com
608-661-8599



The Brink Lounge

- Wed, 7/07 & 8/04 -- **Open Mic with Cactus Joe Leonard** -- 8:00pm
- Fri, 7/16 -- **Midwesterners Acoustic Trio** -- 9:00pm
- Wed, 7/28 -- **Madison Songwriters Group** -- 7:30pm

Mad Toast Live! at the The Brink Lounge
Tuesdays -- Music, talk and variety show hosted by Chris Wagoner and Mary Gaines -- Now at 6:00pm -- \$5 unless otherwise noted

- 7/13 -- **Tim Seisser**
- 7/20 -- **Montana Skies**
- 7/27 -- **Guest TBA**



701A E. Washington
www.high-noon.com
608-268-1122

High Noon Saloon

- Tue, 7/06 -- **The Dirty Shirts** -- 6:30pm -- \$4(21+)
- Sat, 7/17 -- **Anne Heaton / Rose Polenzani** -- 7:00pm -- \$10 (21+)



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

Cafe Carpe

- Sat, 7/03 -- **Ray Bonneville** -- 8:30pm -- \$10
- Thu, 7/08 -- **The New Pioneers** -- 7:00pm -- \$7.50
- Fri, 7/09 -- **Boo Bradley** -- 8:30pm
- Sat, 7/10 -- **Dave Ramont** -- 8:30pm

Wild Hog in the Woods Coffeehouse

- Sun, 7/04 -- **Potluck and Music Jam** -- 12:00pm - 8:00pm -- Hyland Park Apartments, 5400 Caddis Bend, Fitchburg

Figs

KG & The Ranger

- Wednesday, July 21, 2010 -- Central Park Concerts, North Main St. Edgerton WI -- 6:30 - 8:30 PM -- free (bring lawn chairs) Classic Cowboy Songs and Harmony Yodeling - a musical journey back to the days of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. For more info call 608-222-4084

Richard Wiegel

- Sat 7/17 Richard Wiegel/Frankie Lee Duo, Byrd's Pub, 9pm, no cover, (Middleton)
- Sun 7/18 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Benefit, Richard Wiegel w/ Bill and Bobbie Malone and the Blue Sky Boys, Bradley House, 1-3pm \$55 cover
- Wed 7/21 Mr. Richards and the Funtime Express, Monona Terrace rooftop, 10a no cover (Richard's Kids Show)
- Fri 7/23 Midwesterners Acoustic Trio, Sprecher's Pub, 9pm no cover
- Sat 7/24 Old Fashioned Festival Baraboo, Richard Wiegel Solo, 8 to 11 am, no cover.
- Sat 7/31 The Midwesterners at Atwood Summerfest, time TBA

Jim Schwall

- Sat 7/03, Talula, Madison WI -- Jim's print show opens.
- Sun 7/04, Delavan WI -- Jim solo, private party.
- Fri 7/09, 4:15 PM & Saturday, July 10, 7:00 PM, Bastille Days, Milwaukee WI -- Cajun Strangers.
- Sun 7/11, 3PM -- 7PM, Talula -- opening reception for Jim's Figurescapes print show.
- Mon 7/12, Crystal Corner, 9:30 PM -- SoDangYang, no cover.
- Wed 7/14, Alchemy, Madison, 8:30 PM -- Song Showdown, no cover.
- Sat 7/24, Side Track Bar, Portage WI -- Jim solo and with band.
- Sun 7/25 -- Cajun Strangers, private party.
- Mon 7/26, Crystal Corner, 9:30 PM -- Jim solo, no cover.
- Sat 7/31, late afternoon, Atwood Neighborhood Festival, Madison -- Jim Schwall/Andy Ewen Band.

On the Air



Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/Tom Martin-Erickson
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
Sun -- 3:00-5:00pm

- On the Horizon** (world music) w/Ford Blackwell, Paul Novak & Dan Talmo
Weekdays 9:00am-noon
- Sun -- **World Book of Records** (folk from the world over) w/Tracy Doreen
- Tue -- **Pastures of Plenty** (traditional American folk) w/John Fabke
- Wed -- **Back to the County** (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

Madison Dance

African/African-American Dance classes with live drumming -- Sun, 7:00-9:00pm -- Metro Dance, 3009 University Ave. -- 255-3677 / 251-4311

English Country Dance taught -- 1st and 3rd Mon, 7:30-9:30pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 238-9951 or 238-9951

Cajun Dance taught -- Sun 5/09 -- instruction at 6:15pm, dance 7:00-10:00pm -- Harmony Bar & Grill, 2201 Atwood Ave -- 249-4333

International Dancing -- Wed and Sun; classes 7:30-8:30pm, request dancing 8:30-11:00pm -- The Crossing, 1127 University Ave. -- 241-3655

Irish Dancing -- Monthly Ceili and set dance events are posted at celticmadison.org/dance

Italian Dancing -- Tue, 7:00-9:00pm, no experience or partner necessary -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 838-9403 (Philana)

Madison Contra Dance Cooperative -- Tue; 7:30 jam band practice, intermediate level dancing 7:45-9:40pm -- \$5 for non-members -- Gates of Heaven, 302 E. Gorham -- 238-3394 (Steve)

Morris Dancing -- Wed, 7:00pm -- call for location -- 238-9951

Scottish Country Dancing -- Sun, 7:00pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 835-0914

Misc

Madison Ukulele Club -- Singalongs 1st and 3rd Weds 7:00-9:00pm -- call for location -- 246-8205 (Andrew)



Book Report

COLD PIZZA FOR BREAKFAST

A Mem-wha??

by Christine Lavin

You've probably picked up an autobiography of some fascinating person, only to find that being the first astronaut to play scrabble with a Martian cactus didn't turn that person into a gifted author. On the other hand, you've probably picked up an autobiography of someone with a beige life and found the book impossible to put down because of the writing. Christine Lavin not only has a life like a pageant but also the writing skill to pull it across your mind's folding riser like a psychedelic tableau.

Christine's excellent new autobiography, **COLD PIZZA FOR BREAKFAST**, is available right now for about \$15 or \$10 in digital format, and soon to be available as an audio book read by Christine herself. If you have seen her on stage, you already know her style, which is clear, hilarious, personal, warm, edgy, and exciting all at the same time, and oh, by the way, also musical and poetic. This is what her prose writing is like, with a cadence that bounces along like a merry conversation.

This kind of breezy writing isn't as easy as it seems (believe me). But it's obvious from her songs that Christine has been working successfully with this natural delivery for years. A conversational lilt is hard to achieve in a song lyric, with its set rhyme and meter. In prose, for me anyway, it's even harder, oddly. But in any case, Christine overcomes whatever her personal stylistic barriers may be to end up with a book that NEVER feels forced or contrived.

So the book is a delight to read, but as anyone who has seen *This Is Spinal Tap* knows, a career in the music biz isn't all rosy. **Cold Pizza** is overall upbeat, however Christine does not shy away from the mortifications, illnesses, mistakes, the fears, the bloopers, the tragedies of making a living as a performing songwriter. These memories must have been grim to trudge through, but they make the book humble, believable, and captivating.

Making it even more readable, Christine breaks up the prose with plenty of conversations, sixteen pages of photographs, and also scads of song lyrics -- hers and others -- throughout the book. Then to finish it off, there is an extensive index in the back of the book of 1,000 songs she has played on her radio show. Yes, Christine has a radio show!

LONG DISCLAIMER

Christine has a radio show because, as she says in a typical understatement, she likes to "help people." She quotes her late dear friend and mentor:

"One of Dave Van Ronk's mantras was, 'When music of quality sells, it's good for all of us. Never root against your competitor if what they are doing is good work, because ultimately you will benefit from it.'"

Christine takes this mantra to heart and pumps it to a higher level altogether. She goes far out of her way to boost the careers of musicians who would be considered by casual observers as her "competitors." I know this not only from the stories in this book and from talking with countless musicians over the years, but also from personal experience.

We -- my music partner Lou and I -- have shared the stage with Christine quite a few times in quite a few places, as funny songwriters are often presented together. But a number of these gigs have been created out of whole cloth by Christine herself. For instance, back in 1996 Christine put together a two night festival of funny songs at New York's famous **Bottom Line**, and, working with Shanachie Entertainment Corp, released two volumes called *Christine Lavin Presents: LAUGH TRACKS; Two Evenings of Music and Madness, Live at the Bottom Line*. We were part of that marvelous scene, and are represented on the recording, thanks 99% to Christine. (I remember, among other excitements, we met and yakked with the goofy genius Andy Breckman backstage for quite a while; he went on to create the television show **MONK**.)

One more example: Every now and then we do play a gig on our own somewhere in Manhattan. I think it was in 2004 that we had our first gig in the groovy little basement venue of a place called the **Cornelia Street Cafe**. Sometime prior to the date, Lou called Christine to ask if she'd like to come to the

show. Christine said she would but she had another show at an earlier time she wanted to see. It was one of her favorite groups, the stellar Weavers-reproduction group, *Work o' the Weavers*. She snapped into action and arranged it that our show would be announced at their show, and a special 2-ticket price would apply for those who would like to see both shows! Imagine! Needless to say we had a good crowd and a swell time.

These are only a couple of examples of Christine's countless efforts that have DIRECTLY benefitted our career. But I'm not writing about her book as any sort of return favor. I'm writing about it because I think it's a wonderful book, and have added these personal experiences only as examples of the deep well of autobiographical generosity she has been able to draw from.

END OF LONG DISCLAIMER

Christine offers many suggestions to songwriters and others in the music business that she has been taught by mentors and showbiz friends, or learned from experience. So many of these suggestions are wide-ranging, they apply to the lives of plumbers and hairdressers too. But it is a book about the arts.

And by "the arts," I include knitting, baton twirling, and various other fringe artistic pursuits which she weaves into the fabric of her performances. Much of the last part of the book turns to the theater, of which she is a diehard fan. She has seen the Broadway musical *The Drowsy Chaperone* 67 TIMES! She is crazy about Dame Edna (see Google). Christine is as much an art input fanatic as an art output fanatic, devouring as much music and theater as she can afford. With the same two-way spirit, in her own career she also accepts help and advice from others as graciously as she offers it. **Cold Pizza For Breakfast** is an education in the dynamics of living such a life and basing it in the teeth of one of the world's most hopped up cities.

Here I am at the end of this infomercial and I haven't even started in on her creation of the *Four Bitchin' Babes*, or her one-night stint as an actress, or her love affair with a pirate... You have to read this book, folks! --WZ, July 2010

Cold Pizza for Breakfast: a Mem-Wha??

by Christine Lavin

Tell Me Press, New Haven CT, list \$21.95

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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Blue Mound Sing-Along Continues

by Meg Skinner

We can't always promise weather as dramatic as last month's Summer Sing-along, when a spectacular lightning display, brilliant yellow and green sunset, and a double rainbow illuminated the sky, but you are sure to have a good time singing along with Madison's Own Mac Robertson at the Summer Sing-along scheduled for Friday, July 16 at 8 p.m. in the Main Shelter of Blue Mounds State Park, 4350 Mounds Park Road, Blue Mounds, WI 53517 -- rain or shine! Bring your instruments; Rise Up Singing books of lyrics will be provided. All ages are welcome; 4 kids under 6, fans of Mac Robertson, shared a camp blanket watching the family of Dave Eagan play guitars and dance, and Mike Tuten beat on his ceramic drum, as Mac led the audience requests.



To get to Blue Mounds from Madison, take Highway 18-151 west to Cty. Hwy. F, then follow the brown (state) signs to the park. A park sticker is required to enter the park, but the sing-along is free, sponsored by the Madison Folk Music Society and Friends of Blue Mounds State Park.

Madison Folk Music Society

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Send your check, payable to MFMS to: Mad Folk c/o Tracy Comer, P.O. Box 930446, Verona, WI 53593-0446

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