

# MadFolk News

## THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’

As we all navigate this very difficult time in the world, we too have canceled our concerts for the rest of the season. We hope to be able to reschedule everyone next season, and as soon as we can start gathering together again in the music community we will and oh the music will flow!

We know there are imminent hardships all around us, but today I would like to remind you of the hardships on touring musicians deprived of income. Members of MadFolk have always been so supportive, not only coming to the shows, but purchasing the music. Perhaps with the funds you are not spending on the show we have recently cancelled, you could reach out to the performers websites and purchase one of their CDS.

Also many performers are doing online concerts for a donation, or giving music lessons, perhaps check the website of your favorite performers and see what is available to you.

Please check out the Facebook page for Madison Folk Music Society – “like” our page so more people know about it, and feel free to post any online concert you may know about, or take a look there, as we are posting there as we see them, and have invited the musicians to post their shows there too so that you the music lover can find them in a one-stop shop.

We don’t know what the next month will bring us for a newsletter, even if we will be allowed to print, or mail, etc. However, please know we will do our best to keep it going. Perhaps it will be small for now, and if our only option is to post to our webpage... then we will do it. Please feel free to reach out to the board with any concerns or suggestions.

### On the Air

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**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](http://www.wpr.org/simplyfolk)



**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 - Another Green World w/ Katie & Tessa
- Wed - Back to the Country (country music on a theme) w/ Bill Malone
- Thur - Diaspora (folk and international) w/ Terry O’
- Fri - Mud Acres (bluegrass and acoustic) w/ Chris Powers



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

Plus Community Members Hosted Shows

Streaming Live and on your mobile device through tunein radio

## My Highway Home

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# What A Long Strange Trip It's... Gonna' Be?

I was a teenager when I first heard the Grateful Dead song: Truckin' (What A Long Strange Trip It's Been). I remember thinking that I liked the groove, and the melody, and the cadence of the poetry. But I did not understand it. Some of it was related to a culture, about which I could only imagine. Some of it was related to a culture I never wanted to be a part of in the first place. But some of it was about exactly what I wanted to become, a full-time touring road musician.

30 years later, I understand this song on a different level. Especially now, I have begun to resonate with the last few stanzas of the lyrics:

*You're sick of hangin' around and you'd like to travel  
Get tired of travelin', you want to settle down  
I guess they can't revoke your soul for tryin'  
Get out of the door and light out and look all around*

*Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me  
Other times, I can barely see  
Lately, it occurs to me  
What a long, strange trip it's been*

*Truckin', I'm a goin' home  
Whoa, whoa, baby, back where I belong  
Back home, sit down and patch my bones  
And get back truckin' on*

When Covid-19 started making the headlines, I never thought that I would be living out the plot of a Michael Creighton Sci-Fi suspense thriller from the home of friends, and from the front seat of my 2014 Toyota Camry. (201,000 miles and going strong, for those keeping count.) I'm guessing I will have an unprecedentedly small number of additional miles on the old boy this year. Sir William (my car – Bill to his friends...) is a great road companion. In consort with a regular rotation of various Beanie Babies that reside on my dash-board, we have traveled cross-continent in the US and Canada many times. We have driven from just south of Hudson Bay to the southern tip of Florida, and he's been a true road-dog and a reliable roadie throughout.

It was Goldie before that, a 2003

Honda Civic (Thanks Deb! Goldie's previous caretaker.) Before Goldie it was Bessie. Yes, named after Bessie Smith. That was my other Toyota Camry – a 2005. AMAZING trunk space in that car. Good for stashing a lot of road gear. She also made 200K before our ways parted tragically, when she was stolen. I got to say goodbye – but it was hard. And before Bessie there was Bertie. Short for Bertha, she was my 2000 Saturn Station Wagon. I bought a Saturn because Bob Franke drove a Saturn. And he even wrote his Saturn into a blues song of his. "Go and buy yourself a Saturn, Get you to the gig on time..."

If it was good enough for Bob Franke, one of my all-time favorite writers, it was good enough for me.

Early in the fall of 2000, I took a big leap. I had been touring regionally for several years in the NW, based out of Seattle. But I decided to drop the day gig, and hit the road full-time. I bought a new car while I still had a credible job, bought a brand-new James Goodall - Koa Concert Jumbo guitar, and then quit my job. I have looked in the rear-view mirror a few times, but I have never really looked back.

On my first truly national tour, which was a marvelous success much to my own surprise, I brought along some of my favorite CDs. The Grateful Dead's American Beauty, and Working Man's Dead. Queen, Jackson Brown, Bachman Turner Overdrive, America, Willie Nelson, Jim Croce, Tret Fure, Bob Franke, and many other recordings that had ignited my imagination for life on the road. But I digress.

What I really wanted to know, was if those songs and records made more sense to me now that I actually WAS a touring road musician. I felt good, listening while I was driving. And touring from Seattle as a home-base meant that I did a LOT of driving. In ways, the songs did make more sense to me. Especially Jackson Brown's Running On Empty. Portions of those performances were recorded live, on the tour bus, while they were driving. I resonate with that whole album more and more as I continue to grow into my years on the road. A certain sincerity resides in the

recording that transcends the Zeitgeist of time and place, and sings into any given present moment, uniquely and authentically.

Buddhist meditation is at its heart, a practice of letting go of our past worries, releasing the unknown future, and bringing our consciousness into the present moment. Many of us are afraid of the future, and miss out on the present moment because of it. Many of us are afraid of the present moment and the chaos and uncertainty it seems to hold. But for most of us, the present moment is benign. The present moment is resident in each breath we take and each thought we have. And in some small but important ways, we can shape the next moment with how we spend this one.

We can choose to take a deep breath, notice the song of a bird, notice the laughter of a child, the sun on our skin or the wind in our face. We can choose to notice the blossom of a flower or the art hanging on the wall. We can choose to notice the abundance of resources we still have access to in our homes, and in the world. We can remember that our ancestors survived many trials and tribulations to bring us into this moment. And we can honor them by actually being in this moment. Again, and again.

Column continued on next page

*Joe Jencks is 20-year veteran of the international Folk scene, an award winning songwriter and vocalist, and a contributing writer to numerous publications. His column **My Highway Home** is a recent addition to the Mad-Folk newsletter. For more information please visit: [www.joejencks.com](http://www.joejencks.com).*

*Joe Jencks continues to host a monthly radio show called **My Highway Home** on the new Folk Music network – **Folk Music Notebook**. This show features interviews with people Joe meets in his extensive travels along with music by many artists from the big tent that is Folk Music. Tune in on the first Monday of the month at 9:00 PM ET/ 6:00 PM PT. And rebroadcast on the following Sundays at 1:00 PM ET / 10:00 AM PT. Several past episodes are archived through **Folk Music Notebook** including shows about the Kerrville Folk Festival, Old Songs Festival, The Great Labor Arts Exchange, Ireland, and an interview with Sonny Ochs.*

**Listen in online via:**  
[www.folkmusicnotebook.com](http://www.folkmusicnotebook.com)

That is what music is and what music does. It brings us into this moment, whether we are playing and singing or listening to a recording or broadcast, we can become lost in the expansive and ever eternal NOW.

Jerry Garcia discovered scuba diving late in his life. He did not know it would be late in his life at the time. He was only five years older than me when he died. Sobering. But the point is that he spent a lifetime searching for the eternal NOW. He found it in music, and he found it in mind-altering substances and experiences. But when he found scuba diving, he said that he wished he had found it years earlier in his life. I heard him say once in an NPR interview, "I would never had had to use all those drugs, if I had known that such beauty and serenity existed just a few feet below the surface of the water." How about that?

Jerry was always Truckin'. But he did find the eternal now in many ways. And he encouraged younger people to try and find it without so many drugs. He passed no moral judgement on himself or others for substance use or abuse. But he was aware that it had taken a toll on his body and longevity. I am aware that people just assume if you're a "Dead" fan that you also "partake." Maybe, maybe not. Your call. What matters is the spiritual principal that he was chasing, and

that I chase every time I pick up an instrument, sing a song, go for a walk in the woods, get lost in making art of any form, or settle into the Zen of cooking a really good meal.

But, especially when we do something kind for another, we are residing in the eternal now. Because we are transcending our own suffering and offering our consciousness to be in service to another. In those moments, our mind is no longer chained to our regrets or fears in the same way. We are busy being in this moment. We are in the now, and very likely adding to another's joy in the future. We are banking tranquility, or equanimity as the Buddhists call it, for when we need a little more ourselves.

There is always now. It is a comfort and a solace. And now is the only time in which I can become a better musician, author, artist, recording engineer, cook, or chase any other desire or idea. I can prepare for the future, I can plan. But we have all seen what happens to our plans when we hit a major road bump. But in this moment, in the now, this is when I exist.

So, I made some art last night. I cooked some good food. I will pick up an instrument when I am done writing, and bank some practice time. I will offer up any discomfort or difficulty I experience with the intention that my efforts will bring

someone else a needed moment of solace. And when I perform that piece of music I labored over, I will not remember the effort, I will live in the eternal now, trying to sing and play just a little better than last time.

I encourage you to sing, create, and play your instruments more frequently as well. It is such a marvelous practice. It relieves stress, and helps us bring beauty into the world. Even if you are a beginner, make some music. It will help ease whatever is dragging your mind into the past or future. It will help you notice this moment. I promise!

I won't be scuba diving anytime soon. And I do feel in some moments like I'm, Running on Empty. But there is always the eternal now. And I will make it back home eventually, or redefine what and where home is. Either way... I'll keep Truckin'.

I hope you will too!

*Truckin', got my chips cashed in  
Keep truckin', like the do-dah  
man  
Together, more or less in line  
Just keep truckin' on...*

In Gratitude & Song,

Joe Jencks  
3-18-20

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The American Federation of Musicians, AFM Local 1000 is a great organization. Chartered specifically to serve independent touring artists in the Folk and Americana/Roots communities, AFM Local 1000 has been a stalwart ally of working road musicians for nearly 30 years. They have an Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) that helps provide for members in times of need. 100% of all donations to the AFM Local 1000 ERF will go to working musicians in need. During this time of uncertainty, please consider making a donation of any size to AFM Local 1000's Emergency Relief Fund. Representing over 500 musical artists throughout the US and Canada, MANY of your favorite touring musicians are members!

Please visit: <https://www.local1000.org/product/emergency-relief-fund>



Review by Kiki Schueler

Joe Henry wrote the songs on *The Gospel According to Water* thinking he was going to die; he recorded them knowing he was going to live. I hadn't seen Henry in more than twenty years, the last time was as part of the mud-splattered but stellar line-up at the Guinness Fleadh at the Chicago Speedway, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to see him again recently at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music. During the show he told the story of how he had been diagnosed with stage four prostate cancer, and given less than a year to live, fifteen months before. The first Gospel tunes were written curled in bed, a creative trickle that turned into a flood. He called in a favor to record the tracks as quickly as possible, what were supposed to be demos done with a skeleton crew, even as a second opinion improved his chances. Following two intense recording sessions he realized he had a record, and released *The Gospel*. Now in remission thanks to intensive drug therapy, Henry is relishing the opportunity to play live.

As you might expect from Henry, the record is mellow, flush with emotion, but decidedly not melancholy. In addition to being a respected songwriter, Henry is known as a skilled producer. So it is remarkable that this record is barely produced, and it's a wise decision. The occasional rough edge intensifies its urgency. The backbone of every song

is his acoustic guitar and vocal, both sounding comfortingly real, and astonishingly rich. The epic title track hints at his initial diagnosis, "there's beauty in the making of what will go unseen," without making it the focus. The titular line is one of the most powerful, "How else could go my gospel? Who else would not be saved without you as the water standing here behind the wave?" Likewise, "Bloom," "Book of Common Prayer," and "General Tzu Names the Planets for his Children" all take advantage of that guitar and vocal pairing. Despite the name, the latter may be the record's most peaceful track, a lullaby of sorts. "Green of the Afternoon" introduces John Smith on acoustic guitar, and the interplay of the two is hypnotic.

The other notable players here are multi-instrumentalist Patrick Warren, who has played with artists ranging from Keith Urban to Bettye LaVette, whose soulful piano is the perfect complement, and Henry's son Levon. Levon plays clarinet and tenor sax in ways both traditional and non. Nowhere is this more evident than standout track "Orson Wells." It opens with the whisper of a softly vibrating reed, as the song progresses the clarinet wavers between raspy breath and barely-there notes, all while Warren's stately piano supports the tune. With lines like "You provide the terms of my surrender, and I'll provide the war," it's the most immediately memorable track here. The pair interact beautifully again on "Gate of Prayer Cemetery #2" (this time with Levon on tenor sax), and on "In Time for Tomorrow." Despite the former's title and the latter's opening line "I came here for the funeral of all sorrow," neither is funereal.

The only addition beyond those first sessions were the backing vocals of JT Nero and Allison Russell on

"The Fact of Love." The couple, who perform as The Birds of Chicago, are friends of Henry's and were also his opening act that night at the Old Town School. As they joined him on stage, it was clear how much it meant to Henry to be able to share the Gospel with an audience. He obviously is getting by with a little help from his friends.

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](mailto:madfolk@charter.net). Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org).

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Madison-Folk-Music-Society/34497984835>

**"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](http://www.madfolk.org). If you have questions about your membership in the meantime, send email to [info@madfolk.org](mailto:info@madfolk.org). Thanks for your membership and support of Mad Folk!

**Way #1 – online**

Visit [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org) and click on "Join MFMS"

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