

# Mad Folk News

## Welcome back to Kiki's House of Righteous Music

When the pandemic first closed venues and cancelled shows, I thought it would be just a few weeks/months before things would be up and running again. Dang, I hate being wrong. For eighteen months, the only sounds in the basement were the sploosh of the washing machine and the ping pong of a ball bouncing off a table in playback position. A lot of folks checked in to tell me how much they missed seeing shows at the house, they wondered how I was doing, and most important, they wanted to know when the shows would start again. I didn't really have an answer. I decided to let the artists decide when it was time. As vaccinations became readily available, I started hearing from some of my favorite musicians and I began booking shows. Some shows were never intended to be inside. The Freakons, featuring members of the Mekons and Freakwater, played two enchanted shows in the backyard on a Sunday in July that should have been miserably hot, but somehow wasn't. Some were scheduled to be

in the basement, Steve Wynn in September and Dean Schlabowske's Trash Mountain Trio in August, but moved outside as numbers climbed once again.

Jason Ringenberg, of Jason & the Scorchers, was the first to return to the basement. In order for everyone, artist and audience alike, to feel safe, I limited capacity to thirty people (about half the usual sold-out crowd), required vaccination, and asked that everyone wear a mask when not actively drinking. Everyone was happy to comply, and it went extremely well. It felt good to be back. I expected a crush of people starved for live music once I started shows again, but it seems that everyone's comfort level is different, and some just aren't ready yet. Instead, nearly every show thus far has been full (technically half full I guess), but with short or nonexistent wait lists. That has changed with the announcement of December's shows. Evenings with the self-proclaimed "King of the Basement," Jon Dee Graham, with 23 KHoRM shows

under his belt, and the always-popular, always-terrific, Flat Four (drummer Alex Hall is out with JD McPherson reducing the band number by one) both filled up the day they were announced, leaving many sure-to-be-disappointed folks on the wait lists. The third show, Jason Narducy (Split Single, Bob Mould's bass player) on December eleventh, has only a few spots left before it too is full.

As everyone is well aware, things aren't back to normal, but for a few hours a couple times a month, they feel a little less weird. Just don't get so comfortable that you forget to lift your mask before you take a drink of that beer. There will be plenty more shows coming in 2022, including some that were cancelled back in '20. If you are vaccinated and ready to see some live music in an intimate setting, but aren't yet on the e-mail list, contact me at righteous-musicgmt@gmail.com, and I will add you. Maybe someday we will get back to where we were before, but for now the new normal isn't all bad.

## Peter Mulvey Returns to Our House on Dec. 10

How long has it been since Peter Mulvey has performed at Our House? TOO LONG! He returns for a 7:30 show on Friday, Dec. 10. (Contact us at [annedave@chorus.net](mailto:annedave@chorus.net) to reserve a seat.)

Since Peter left Wisconsin for Massachusetts in the recent past, he's gotten married and adopted a child. But he's still a road warrior, bringing his music, poetry and social justice/environmental/humanist message to listeners of all ages. On stage he's funny, charming, outrageous, political and heart-warming.

In his wild younger days, Peter cut his musician's teeth busking in Dublin, the Boston subway system and coffeehouses of all shapes and sizes. He's cranked out 19 albums, including his most recent one, a live performance

at The Café Carpe with the talented SistaStrings duo. He's opened for people like Ani DiFranco, Emmylou Harris and Chuck Prophet. And did we mention that he's also done a TedTalk?

But his real forte' is playing in small, intimate settings like The Café Carpe in Fort Atkinson and house concerts, where his music and message come out loud and clear. On the Carpe stage, for example, Peter has for years created The Lamplighter Sessions. Each December he brings together people like Willy Porter, Paul Cebar, Kris Delmore, Randy Sabien, Bill Camplin, SistaStrings, and many more. Each Lamplighter night is a bit of musical magic in the round. If you've never attended, you are missing live music at its finest.

Oh, and did we mention his annual

bicycle tours around the country? He's logged miles and miles on his bike, then he stops in small towns and large cities to weave his poetic spell.

If you've ever wondered what happens when a dolphin gets a head cold, and what it's like to roam the back roads of Ireland at night, come on over to Our House on Dec. 10. Peter's songs will weave a warm quilt of music on a cold winter's night. What could be better than that?

One more item: Our House is an intimate space. We require one and all to be vaccinated before walking in the door, and masks are encouraged.

Send us a message at [annedave@chorus.net](mailto:annedave@chorus.net) to reserve your seat now!

David Wallner and Anne Katz

# On the Air

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**Simply Folk** on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Dan Robinson, Host

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• 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](https://facebook.com/stuart.stotts)



## Common Chord

• Dec. 2, 2021, 7pm - Common Chord holiday show @ The Brink Lounge, benefit for Porchlight, Inc.

## Behind Our House

Reserve space required. Contact A&D at [annedave@chorus.net](mailto:annedave@chorus.net) with questions.

• Sat, Dec 11th, @7:30pm - Peter Mulvey - \$20/person

## Kiki's House of Righteous Music

All shows are limited capacity and vaccination required. Please bring your vax card (or a picture of it) and a mask to wear when not actively drinking. Contact Kiki at [righteousmusicmgmt@gmail.com](mailto:righteousmusicmgmt@gmail.com) with questions.

• Sat, Dec 4th, @8pm (doors @7) - Jon Dee Graham - \$20/person

• Sat, Dec 11th, @8pm (doors @7) - Jason Narducy - \$25/person

• Fri, Dec 17th, @8pm (doors @7) - Kelly Hogan, Nora O'Connor, Scott Ligon & Casey McDonough - \$30

**O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL - HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER**  
**2021 - MERGE RECORDS**



Review by Kiki Schueler

O Come All Ye Faithful is obviously a holiday record, but it is also very distinctively a Hiss Golden Messenger record. MC Taylor, Hiss mastermind and only constant member, has made the soundtrack for a cozy eve by the fire, with hot toddies and thoughtful gifts. He states his intention, “Big, brash holiday music—the type that we hear in big-box stores in the middle of December—has never resonated with me, and this past year it felt absolutely dissonant. I wanted to make a seasonal record that felt more in step with the way that I, and so many others, experience this time of year: quiet, contemplative, searching, and bittersweet,” and he has definitely succeeded. The record’s nine tracks are distributed equally between originals, covers, and traditionals, with those in the latter categories reworked in his distinctive style. It’s the aural equivalent of a weighted blanket. On board are some usual suspects— guitarist Chris Boehner, Matt Douglas on woodwinds, and drummer Matt McCaughan, each with a handful of HGM credits, as well as some A-list guest carolers. Modern vintage R&B hero Nathaniel Rateliff and Irish-American(a) heroine Aoife O’Donovan add “singing,” and ultimate sideman Buddy Miller plays electric guitar. Still, it’s Taylor’s distinctive voice that takes center stage.

His rendition of Woody Guthrie’s “Happy Hannukah” retains little of the original melody, instead pairing the

light-hearted lyrics to a tune more than reminiscent of “Happy Birthday, Baby” from his 2019 release Terms of Surrender. Tatiana Hargreaves brings the square dance fiddle. Meanwhile, CCR’s “As Long as I Can See the Light” stripped of John Fogerty’s distinctive vocals is barely recognizable, despite the fact that he keeps the melody intact. It’s not a song usually associated with the holidays, but Taylor exposes a spirituality I hadn’t noticed before. Which leads us to the other “light” song, Spiritualized’s “Shine a Light.” Again, a bit of a surprise, but it works by trimming the original’s seven plus minutes to a manageable four and a half, and bringing the song’s (extremely limited) prayer-like lyrics to the fore, “When I’m tired and all alone, Lord shine a light on me. And when I’m lonesome as can be, Lord shine a light on me.” Throughout the record, but especially here, Douglas uses his saxophone like a backing vocal. It’s sincerely beautiful and intoxicating. When you put together his work with HGM and as a member of the Mountain Goats, he makes a powerful case for making the saxophone cool again.

When it came to choosing traditional Christmas songs, Taylor did not dig deep. The three he selected read like the top answers to a Family Feud question. From grade school pageants to those brash, big-box soundtracks, these are songs we all know. Even so, in his hands, they still inspire. The title track uses O’Donovan, Douglas, and Devonne Harris’s piano to fresh and stunning effect. By changing the lyrical pacing of “Silent Night,” he makes you listen to words you’ve heard a million times. The subtle accordion is the perfect touch. Meanwhile, his understated “Joy to the World” swirls with electric and acoustic guitar. The three Taylor penned for this effort, to be honest, sound a lot like regular old Hiss songs. The darkest

of the three, “Hung Fire” tells of “St Nick at the racetrack giving it out” and “a gun to my head,” but the chorus of “It’s Christmas, baby, thank God we made it,” leaves room for hope. The chorus of “Grace” is lovely in its simplicity and backing vocals (I hear you Mr. Rateliff!). The buoyant “By the Lights of St Stephen” feels inspired by “Good King Wenceslas,” but happier.

“O Come All Ye Faithful” is not the most Christmas-y record you will hear this holiday season, but it is one that will hold up to many listens, and just may last well into January.

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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Book Review

**HOUSE of EARTH** by Woody Guthrie

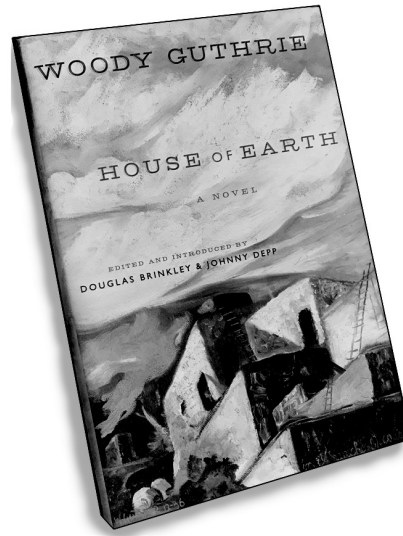
Woody Guthrie began thinking about writing what was to become **House of Earth**, his only complete novel, sometime in the late 1930s. He didn't really get down to it until about 1946. It was finished in 1947, when he was 35 years old. Meanwhile this tireless creative wizard had taken only two years -- 1941 to 1943 -- to write the legendary **Bound for Glory**, his autobiography, squeezing this project in between performing, recording, writing dozens of songs, falling in love (again), and so forth.

**Bound for Glory** was published in 1943. Four years later, **House of Earth** was completed but NOT published, for a number of reasons. For one thing, the opening chapter of the book is one of the most exciting and charming renditions of a loving couple having sex that I think I've ever read. But this sort of thing would have been in legal trouble in 1947 so was not pursued. For another thing, Guthrie really had his heart set on having the book be made into a movie, so instead of working on having it published as a book, he sent the manuscript to Irving Lerner (1909-1976), controversial Hollywood director, who unfortunately did not proceed with Guthrie's wishes for a **House of Earth** movie.

So the brilliant manuscript languished until 2012, when the Lerner estate was organizing its archives. The manuscript came to light and was immediately shipped to the University of Tulsa's Woody Guthrie collection. As it turns out, author and historian Douglas Brinkley and actor, producer, and musician Johnny Depp were going through these old records for a piece they were doing on Bob Dylan for **Rolling Stone** magazine. Amazed, they wrote a wonderful introduction and published the book in 2013 through Depp's film production company, Infinitum Nihil, with Harper.

The book is about a chunk of time in the life of the fictitious Tike and Ella May Hamlin, living in a tumbledown shack on Texas panhandle land that they don't own, during the dismal dust bowl and depression years. As with so many folks during this time and in this area, they struggle along

trying to make a living while getting further and further behind. Ella May is pregnant and may be wrestling with another medical condition (breast cancer?). By the end of the book, she does have the baby, and despite everything, optimism is in the air.



Being a book by Woody Guthrie, as you might expect, there are plenty of diatribes against big business, especially banks and large agribusinesses, lumberyards, and so forth. His socialist leanings are proudly exhibited and strong fair government is encouraged insofar as it is necessary to keep a lid on capitalism and to help the individual farmer make a decent living protected from predatory private forces. But these ideas don't take up too much space in the narrative. His point is largely made by describing in detail the struggles, fears, and sorrows of the lives of the protagonists.

One obsession Tike has is the need for proper shelter in the wind-swept, dust-swept, snow-swept plains of Texas. He is charmed by a government how-to booklet on building adobe structures that can keep out cold, wind, dust, snow, and fire, and that are essentially free and easy to build. Hence the name of the book, *House of Earth* (with the double meaning of house-made-of-earth and house-for-the-Earth). He rants about wood fairly often, as being susceptible to rot and decay, full of cracks and holes, and generally silly to make homes out of.

This book is not strictly autobiographical, but it feels like most every page relates to some experience in Woody's life. His focus on the evils of wood is understandable as his oldest sister died in a fire, his father was severely injured in a fire, and the same

year **House of Earth** was to come out, his four year old daughter Cathy died in an electrical fire.

But reviewing this work with a this-happened-then-that-happened recap doesn't begin to cover what I find so captivating and fascinating about it. To me, the way he writes with colloquial language, the way the moods of his characters flicker from sane to nuts to happy to sad, from loving to being exasperated, hilarious to somber, hopeful to jaded, and most importantly the way he rises to what you might call a transcendent or visionary state to describe his feeling of oneness with every weed, breeze, and bottle cap of the Southwest -- these magics of language are what make the book a wonder. I'm amazed that he could write the structured songs that he wrote, then using the same brain switch over to these wild, scattered, almost stream of consciousness passages.

I'm going to quote from one of them now, but be advised that the whole book is not like this. Most of the book, in fact, is colloquial and conversational, much like Huck Finn but with more humor, wackiness, romance, and so forth, with these flights of fancy delightfully bubbling up just when one is needed:

*Just some washed-out ditches deep enough to be young canyons and some gullies and some canyons big enough to swallow several of your big towns, cliffs and mesas, gorges and hollers, dry-bedded rivers, sand-bottom creeks, eggless hens, running ducks, stewball nags, hypocrite kilcustards, sons of virgin, hopping hare, buffalo bear, woolly sheep, tedious toddy drinkers, open mouthers, deep thinkers, beer makers, slop inhalers, dust and dirt eaters, and sandrock sleepers. Crawlers of the night soils, diggers under the sunny sod, hole feelers, hole diggers, hole makers, and hole ticklers. Easy gravel walkers and long tale talkers. The soul, the mind, the winds, the spirit of the upper flats, the flat upper panhandles, the winds of heavens unrolling, unfolding, and the listeners down below listening in two or three low brick buildings, wheeling chuck-a-luck, twenty-one, stud, blackjack, muley dice, racehorse mulers, fast nag tippers, coin flippers, vino fermenters, and curly hair sippers. Hair of the top plains.\**

\**House of Earth*, ©2013 Woody Guthrie Publications Inc, pp 93-94

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