

# Madfolk News

## READING IN OUR WINTER WONDERLAND

As we hunker down for the cold, perhaps besides music you may enjoy some reading where the author is one of our folk singers. The following are a few examples, some newer, some older, but all very good reads.

The most recent book that I have seen come out (and just started reading) is by Garnet Rogers, called "6 Crows Gold" I desperately needed a project. I'd carried the first chapter of this book in my head for some years, and decided to give it a shot. I began in July, to see where it led. It wasn't until three quarters of the way into the story that I myself knew who organized the bombings.

Some characters took on lives of their own. The hacker, Izzy, was only supposed to appear briefly, but she became pivotal, if wildly out of control.

Some folks might find the book overly political, particularly those on the right side of the aisle. Politics are only part of the story. I explored the friendship between Callum and Danny, against the backdrop of an increasingly fractured USA culture, the disappearance of reasoned discourse, the rise of White Power, and the ever more violent attacks on women's rights and human rights. To quote a phrase: "Women's rights are Human rights." The reader will have no trouble discerning what side of the question the narrator is on.

At the same time, I wanted to have a little fun, so it is by no means a completely serious book. It's nearly impossible for me to tell any story without looking for the humour. Oh, and there is a bit of awkward Canadian romance in there as well.

A review by a fan: I have just finished Garnet's truly wonderful thriller, 6 Crows Gold. It was an absolutely wonderful read. The characters were engaging, the plot zipped right along, and the resolution was thoroughly satisfying. What made it really special for me was that it was such a joy to read a thriller that served up a feast of disdain (and justice!) for the white power/homophobic/anti-choice MAGA-nuts. And the whole book is replete with that outsize Garnet Rogers wit that I first encountered in his memoir of life on the road with Stan. I am desperately hoping that we have not seen the last of Callum, Danny and

his crew, Julia and (hopefully) Erin. They, like Garnet, deserve an encore or three!

Garnet Rogers wrote his first book called Night Drive, Travels With My Brother, I was able to grab a copy at his last performance in Madison before the pandemic hit. From the back cover: Stories about how Stan and I grew up together, discovered music together, and learned to play in a band and travel together. How the songs got written and recorded. What life was like on the road before there was an independent music scene. And nearly every stupid, inexplicable and bizarre thing that could happen to a pair of young idiots who were naive enough to think they could play folk music for a living back in the mid- 70's and early 80's. The bar fights and the bike gangs, The police chases and the arrests. And a thousand gigs in every corner of North America. It's all here. At least most of it..."

In December we lost Bill Staines, we loved his music, and his stories at his shows and he will be very missed, as he played our stage bi-annually longer than I can remember. But he wrote a book a few years back, even though we won't be able to see Bill play again, perhaps you would like to read his story. The Tour: A Life Between the Lines The Tour is not only a collection of characters, consequences and experiences, it is - perhaps more importantly - an offering up of some of the wisdom gained from "a life between the lines." The Tour is a book that will take you on two journeys, one past and one present. Each fall, Bill Staines leaves his home in New England and sets out on a five week tour of North America, playing his music for fans and friends, and covering almost 15,000 miles of open highway. On the twentieth anniversary of the tour, he began writing this narrative. Read these pages and you will journey with Bill and get to know some of the people and places that make his story worth telling. The Tour is also a chronicle of a life, from the time that Bill spent growing up in the Boston-Cambridge folk music scene in the early 1960's to the present, when he has come to be considered one of the most respected singer-songwriters on the folk music

scene today. It is all here, and it is all written from the heart.

Scott Alarik is another performer that has graced the Madfolk stage who passed away in December. Scott most recently was writing for the Boston Globe, but he also wrote two wonderful books, the first Deep Community: Adventures in the Modern Folk Underground. It was published in 2003 and the book is a compilation of over 120 articles by the author that appeared in either The Boston Globe or Sing Out! between 1992 and 2002. The compilation includes interviews and stories about many of the key figures in contemporary folk music in America and the United Kingdom. Some of the writing is focused on the folk music scene in the Boston, Massachusetts area. The book is 416 pages and contains 96 photographs of the featured musicians. His second book is Revival: A Folk Music Novel this is a novel similar to Crazy Heart and A Star is Born that celebrates America's renewed passion for folk music and singer-songwriters as well as a May-December romance with a young female songwriter and older male songwriter. Set in bars, coffeehouses, open mics and recording studios-author was a regular on A Prairie Home Companion and reviews folk music for the Boston Globe. Catie Curtis says, The characters are so believable you want to go hear them in concert.

If you want a read that will make you laugh, try out Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-wha? By Christine Lavin. As one of the top folk musicians in the country, Christine Lavin has seen it all—and she still loves the music and the life she feels privileged to lead. Published in honor of her twenty-fifth anniversary as a full-time, independent touring musician, Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-wha? is a memoir of road stories and adventures across the United States, Canada, and Australia. "I've changed a few names to spare hurt feelings," Christine notes, "but all these stories are true. Hey, I have eight brothers and sisters—you think they'd let me make things up?"

Stay tuned next month to see what other reads I have in my folk library.....

## My Highway Home

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# A Place In The Choir: Remembering Bill Staines

I was about 11 years old the first time I heard Bill Staines' music. One of my big sisters worked at the Shaver's Creek Environmental Center in Pennsylvania. Bill was friends with the director of the outdoor education program and played a concert there almost annually. My sister loved his performance and bought several cassettes. No small commitment on her part, if you have a sense of what young environmental educators made for a living in the early to mid-80s. He was an instant favorite, and the recordings she brought home to share with me were a joy. His songwriting and delivery were compelling to me, and the authenticity and lack of pretense were inviting. And of course the first Bill Staines song I ever learned to play on my own guitar was A Place In The Choir.

### A Place In The Choir

© Bill Staines

All God's critters got a place in the choir  
Some sing low, some sing higher,  
Some sing out loud on the telephone wires,  
And some just clap their hands, or paws, or anything they got now

Listen to the bass, it's the one on the bottom  
Where the bullfrog croaks and the hippopotamus  
Moans and groans with a big 'do  
And the old cow just goes moo.

The dogs and the cats they take up the middle  
While the honeybee hums and the cricket fiddles,  
The donkey brays and the pony neighs  
And the old coyote howls.

Listen to the top where the little birds sing  
On the melodies with the high notes ringing,  
The hoot owl hollers over everything  
And the jaybird disagrees.

Singin' in the night time, singing in the day,  
The little duck quacks, then he's on his

way.  
The 'possum ain't got much to say  
And the porcupine talks to himself.

It's a simple song of living sung everywhere  
By the ox and the fox and the grizzly gear,  
The grumpy alligator the the hawk above,  
The sly racoon and the turtle dove.

I am quite sure that by the tens of thousands, different fans all around North America and beyond could tell you deeply personal stories about how Bill's music touched their lives. And I hope you share your memories with your friends, family, and community. Bill deserves remembering, and his songs deserve to be sung, again and again. They are timeless.

As a young man, I looked up to Bill as a model of how to be a Folksinger. He was by no means the only model, but a real thriving model nonetheless. Bill Staines walked to his own drummer from the get-go until he passed on December 5th, 2021. While spending much of his career having record deals – including a lengthy stint with Philo Records – he lived the lifestyle of the Indie Singer-Songwriter before that was a hip thing to do. Bill charted his course, and hit the road. He loved the road. For all of his laments about missing home in various forms and places, I think actions almost always speak louder than words. And even for a fine songwriter like Bill, his persistent relationship with the road spanning parts of seven decades suggests that he actually loved what he did. And the fact that he loved the music more than the hype is further testament to his devoted practice of being a true American Folksinger. It was a deep calling and one he manifestly inhabited.

Bill was born in Medford, MA, on February 6th, 1947. His first national release A Bag of Rainbows came out in 1966. From then until this past fall – Bill was a road dog. And he was an adventurer. He wrote fondly of the places he traveled to and the places he was from with equal grace and humor. He wrote an entire suite of music all about Alaska. And songs like

River and Sweet Wyoming Home were veritable Hymns in the Church of Folk. He was a storyteller par excellence, and was also known for his children's albums and performances. His music was used in film and television on a few occasions, and he was a guest on Mountain Stage and on A Prairie Home Companion.

I first met Bill when I opened for him in 2002, at a performance in the big room at Swallow Hill in Denver. Swallow Hill is much like the Oldtown School of Folk Music in Chicago. It is an epicenter and mecca of Folk culture, music, performance, and educational instruction. Swallow Hill is one of the premier Folk venues in all of the western US. Playing there at all on the mainstage was a thrill for me. But sharing a night with Bill Staines, that was a shot in the arm for my blossoming international touring career. It filled my heart and soul in ways I can neither forget nor adequately share. But suffice to say that it was a moment of deep personal satisfaction for me. I had travelled in my own life along some of those highways and byways that Bill wrote and sang about. And I now understood differently his love of the road and the side of humanity he was privileged to see in each of the towns and cities and communities in which he played.

Bill was always kind to me. And he was always a little distant too. A little self-isolating in crowds, seeking solitude and a few close colleagues over throngs of folks at a festival. He was humble in all the right

Column continued on next page

*Joe Jencks is 22-year veteran of the international Folk scene, an award winning songwriter and vocalist, and a contributing writer to numerous publications. For more information please visit: [www.joejencks.com](http://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](http://www.folkmusicnotebook.com)

Column continued from previous page ways, and he understood at some point in his life that the reason people came to see him play was because they wanted to hear specific songs that were as mentioned – Hymns in the Church of Folk. It wasn't that he didn't have anything new to say. 26 + albums prove to me that he had plenty to say and write. But he also understood that certain songs of his were balm for the soul, for others. And whatever he was on about in a given phase of creativity, he also knew that people yearned for the gentle tones of his voice and the comfort of being together and singing together in a Bill Staines concert. To those who said critically of Bill, "Every time I see Bill, it's the same show..." I say kindly, you are wrong. I opened for Bill on several occasions, and shared stages with him at festivals spanning 2 decades. Even when the songs were the same, the singer had changed. And with each passing year, with each new growth-ring on the tree, Bill made the songs feel fresh. It was as if he was speaking a truth that a younger self had written but an older self was just beginning to understand.

#### Sweet Wyoming Home

© Bill Staines

There's a silence on the prairie  
That a man can't help but feel;  
There a shadow growing longer now,  
And nipping at my heels.  
For I know that soon that old four-lane  
That runs beneath my wheels  
Will take me home to my sweet Wyoming home.

I headed down the road last summer  
With a few old friends of mine.  
They all hit the money, Lord,  
I didn't make a time.  
The entrance fees they took my dough,  
And the travelin' took my time,  
And now I'm headed home to my  
sweet Wyoming home.

Watch the moon smiling in the sky  
And hum a tune, a prairie lullaby.  
A peaceful wind, an old coyote's cry  
A song of home, my sweet Wyoming home.

Well, the rounders they all wish you  
luck  
When they know you're in a jam.  
But your money's ridin' on the bull,

And he don't give a damn.  
Well there's shows in all the cities,  
The cities turn your heart to clay;  
It takes all a man can muster  
Just to try and get away.  
And the songs I'm used to hearin'  
Ain't the kind the jukebox plays,  
And now I'm headed home to my  
sweet Wyoming home.

You know I've always loved the ridin',  
There ain't nothin' quite the same,  
And another year may bring the luck  
Of winning all the game.  
There's a magpie on the fence-rail,  
And he's callin' out my name,  
And he calls me home to my sweet  
Wyoming home.

As a songwriter and storyteller, Bill Staines was capable of inhabiting a character with such remarkable authenticity that one would believe that he had been a Hobo, a Cowboy, a Rodeo Circuit Rider, an Alaskan Bush Pilot, and so much more. But it was his capacity for empathy, I believe, that made him both incredibly entertaining and beloved by many; and I expect a bit lonely even in good company. I would submit that one cannot easily turn off that much empathy. One cannot choose to see less humanity in others once it has been seen. Sometimes being alone is easier than trying to tune out so much awareness and perception. And so his long road trips, solitary camping trips, and quiet demeanor when out of the public eye were, I suspect, part of Bill's efforts to consolidate his thoughts and conserve his focus for when he needed it most. But I think he was no less happy alone in any mountain range than he was on any good stage in a room full of people. Bill was a man squarely in his own skin. For that alone he has my respect.

#### RIVER

© Bill Staines

I was born in the path of the winter wind  
And raised where the mountains are old  
The springtime waters came dancing  
down  
And I remember the tales they told

The whistling ways of my younger days  
Too quickly have faded on by  
But all of their memories linger on  
Like the light of a fading sky.

River, take me along  
In your sunshine, sing me your song  
Ever moving and winding and free  
You rolling old river, you changing old  
river  
Let's you and me river run down to the  
sea!

I've been to the city and back again  
I've been moved by some things that I've  
learned  
Met a lot of good people and I called  
them friends  
Felt the change when the seasons turned

I heard all the songs that the children sing  
And listened to love's melodies  
I've felt my own music within me rise  
Like the wind in the autumn trees.

Someday when the flowers are blooming  
still  
Someday when the grass is still green  
My rolling waters will round me bend  
And flow into the open sea

So here's to the rainbow that followed  
me here  
And here's to the friends that I know  
And here's to the song that's within me  
now  
I will sing it wherever I go.

For Bill Staines, there is a global garden of flowers still blooming and the grass is still green in the hearts of those who know and love his music, sing his songs, and cherish his memory. He was a man who gave himself to the muse with dedication. His spirit lives on in every camp counselor and camper who sings about, "the Ox and the Fox and the Grizzly Bear." And for each of us traveling on our own River, we too will and must travel that river until it carries us back to the great sea. Gratefully, we will have Bill's music as our companion on the trip. So, here's to the song that's within us now, Bill. We will sing it wherever we go, and bring a part of you with us on the journey. Thanks for the songs, brother. Thanks for the memories and the kindness, the laughs and the tears, the spirit of hospitality and the creative spark that set so many others on their own path of discovery. Thanks for making a place in your choir for all of us.

# RAISE THE ROOF - ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS

## 2021 - ROUNDER



Review by Kiki Schueler

Raise the Roof aims to prove that lightning can strike twice. The golden rock god Robert Plant and bluegrass fiddler/chanteuse Alison Krauss seemed an odd couple when they released Raising Sand fourteen years ago to raised eyebrows, glowing reviews, chart success, and awards. As unlikely as the pairing seems, the fact that they met at a Lead Belly tribute at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame proves they already had something in common. Less oil and water, more chocolate and peanut butter. At 73, Plant's voice sounds half his age, while Krauss, 50, sounds timeless. As with Sand, the record is mostly covers pulled from a library of genres and ages. Among the most recent, and perhaps most likely to be recognized, is "Can't Let Go," the Randy Weeks composition Lucinda Williams recorded for her masterpiece Car Wheels on a Gravel Road. They dress it up the same way Nancy Sinatra dressed "Day Tripper"... in a miniskirt and go-go boots. And it is completely, brilliantly irresistible. You'll want to do the frug, the watusi, and the Pee Wee Herman. As the first single released months ahead of the record, it certainly wasn't the most representative song, but it is the light-hearted center of an oft weighty and impressive second record.

Opening track "Quattro (World Drifts In)" distills the southwestern es-

sence of Calexico. The result is a more grounded song, less likely to float away into the ether than the original, but still unmistakable as a Burns and Convertino composition. Krauss has said it was hearing this song that finally pointed her in the direction their second collaboration would go. The syncopated string intro is as brilliant an opening line as you could hope for. My ears aren't good enough to tell if it's Buddy Miller (or Stuart Duncan) on mandolin, or Los Lobos' David Hidalgo on jarana (a Mexican guitar relative), but it is perfect. The latter isn't the only obscure instrument in the credits. There's also requinto, marxophone, mellotron and dolceola; all the better to bewitch you with. The mysterious blend with the relatively mundane— cello, piano, banjo, accordion, pedal steel, etc— for a sound that is rich and intoxicating. Producer T-Bone Burnett deserves credit for keeping all that instrumentation from sounding cluttered. Of course, he also gets additional credit for co-penning the sole original "High and Lonesome" with Plant. Frenetic and pulsating, it buzzes with echoed vocals and hand claps, giving Plant room to roam. At its heart though, it's really just a folk song, the bones of "I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground" sticking through its rock and roll skin.

"Last Kind Words Blues," by the enigmatic Geeshie Wiley, comes by its traditional sound the old-fashioned way, by being close to a century old. Think Nirvana doing "In the Pines" on MTV Unplugged. Ditto Ola Belle Reed's "You Led Me to the Wrong," a murder remorse ballad with a graveyard beat and a haunted fiddle. Allen Toussaint's "Trouble with my Lover" burns hot with Krauss's "Fever"ish vocals. The old (gender) switch-

eroo works well as Plant convincingly croons, "As I sit mending your clothes, that you will never ever wear," on Annie Briggs "Go Your Way." Meanwhile, Krauss puts than a few tears in her beer on an emotional take of Merle Haggard's "Going Where the Lonely Go." Between the instruments and the encyclopedic song selection, there is so much to hear on Raise the Roof, every listen reveals something new. Even if you don't peel back the layers, the pairing of Plant and Krauss is tasty enough.

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).

[www.facebook.com/pages/Madison-Folk-Music-Society/34497984835](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Madison-Folk-Music-Society/34497984835)

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

# On the Air



**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 visit <https://wortfm.org> for more info!

• 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 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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## Stuart Stotts

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

# Venues



18 S Water St.  
Ft. Atkinson, WI  
[cafecarpe.com](http://cafecarpe.com)  
920-563-9391

• Sat, Jan. 29th - Jeff Stehr / Mark Soriano / Eliza Hanson - @8pm

• Fri, Feb 4th - Claudia Schmidt - @8pm

• Fri, Mar 4th - Ellis Paul - @8:30pm - \$25

To all our members, we invite you to submit a book review. This should be a book that is folk music related, and/or written by a folk musician. It can be anything from an autobiography to a childrens book. If you're interested, please just send your review to [darlene@bletner.com](mailto:darlene@bletner.com), and we will print in one of our upcoming issues.

## NORTH STREET CABARET

610 North St  
Madison, WI  
[northstreetcabaret.com](http://northstreetcabaret.com)

• Sat, Jan. 8th - Son Del Atlantico - @8pm

• Sat, Jan 29th - Trio Soleil - @8pm

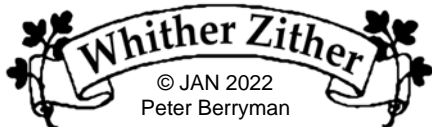
• Fri, Mar 4th - Ellis Paul - @8:30pm - \$25



## Sugar Maple Concert Series

• Fri, Feb. 11, 2022, 8pm - Jake Blount and Laurel Premo @ North Street Cabaret , 610 North Street, Madison - \$15-\$22

• Thu, Mar. 10, 2022, 8pm - The Faux Paws @ North Street Cabaret, 610 North Street, Madison, \$13-\$20



## ROBERT BURNS AND...

### Robert Burns and Scott Alarik

In December 2021, we received the sad news that the brilliant and beloved folk journalist, songwriter, performer, activist, author, lecturer, teacher, and friend Scott Alarik had died. We met Scott in 1980 at the Coffeehouse Festival in Stevens Point WI when he was living in the Twin Cities and involved in the folk scene there. Soon thereafter he moved to Boston and, among other things, became a folk journalist for the **Boston Globe**. The last time I remember an exchange with Scott was over the availability of the works of Robert Burns (1759-1796) which Alarik recommended every songwriter should study. I agreed.

Coincidence: I had just written a *Whither Zither* last month about Woody Guthrie, and thinking about this exchange with Scott, had wondered if Guthrie had at all been influenced by Burns. I googled "Woody Guthrie Robert Burns" and I came across the 2006 **Boston Globe** article "Robert Burns & Woody Guthrie: Two of a Kind?"<sup>1</sup> by none other than Scott Alarik.

### Robert Burns and Woody Guthrie

The answer to that title's question is YES, according to Alarik. "Burns was a genius of humble origins, dubbed 'the Ploughman Poet,' just as Guthrie became 'the Dust Bowl Troubadour.'" Guthrie and Burns were both diehard populists, writing to honor the downtrodden and poverty stricken, Alarik observes, and to point fingers at scoundrels in positions of wealth and power. And they both courageously wrote of sexuality in terms daring for their times.

In an essay by Guthrie called "To That Man Robert Burns," quoted in **Forbes** magazine: "Your talking... had something... most singers seem to miss, the very kiss of warm dew on the stalk."<sup>2</sup> It seems Guthrie was indeed influenced by Burns.

### Robert Burns and Maya Angelou

So I started looking around for other artist fans of Burns, and found quite a few. One

such writer was Maya Angelou. "[Robert Burns] was the first white man I read who seemed to understand that a human being was a human being and we are more alike than unlike."<sup>3</sup> This quote from the **National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive** description of the documentary "Angelou On Burns," in which she commemorates Burns' death bicentenary by traveling to Scotland and exploring their similar experiences in life.

### Robert Burns and Bob Dylan

**HMV** is the name of a big British music store. For their ad campaign of 2008, Bob Dylan was asked what lyric had the greatest impact on his writing. His answer? "A Red, Red Rose" by Robert Burns.<sup>4</sup> I don't blame him. To me, even the first line of this poem ("O my Love is like a red, red rose") is incredible, as doubling the word "red" instead of saying something like "O my love is like a bright red rose" shows the rule-bending creativity of Burns.

### Robert Burns and Frederick Douglas

According to the **Orkney News**, a Scotland newspaper, During America's Civil War era Frederick Douglas frequently alluded to Burns's songs and poems, particularly when trying to encourage men of colour to enlist in the Union army. "He would tout the Burns line that 'A Man's A Man For A' That, regardless of colour.'"<sup>5</sup>

### Robert Burns and Abraham Lincoln

From the same newspaper, according to John Hay, Abraham Lincoln's secretary, "The President adores the Scotchman... He reads him constantly and recites him every evening. He says he would not be the man he was, would not have won the war, indeed would not have been President, had it not been for Robert Burns."

### Robert Burns and John Steinbeck

Kayla Beggarly at **Study.com** explains, "Robert Burns and John Steinbeck are two authors who brilliantly capture the disappointment that follows failed plans. Robert Burns' poem, 'To a Mouse' was the inspiration for the title behind John Steinbeck's 1937 novella, 'Of Mice and Men'. Set in the 1930s during the Great Depression, Steinbeck plays on Burns' idea of shattered dreams and failed plans through the characters of this classic work."<sup>6</sup>

### Robert Burns and Controversy

In an article called "Burns Wasn't on the Right Side of Arguments for Women's Rights" by Sara Sheridan in **The National**, a Scotland newspaper, she points out:

"While Burns 'made love' indiscriminately he did not act according to the mores of the day and certainly did not take into account the social vulnerability of some of the women whose lives he altered for the worse."<sup>7</sup>

### Robert Burns and Everybody

There are hundreds of Robert Burns organizations around the world. The USSR even issued the world's first Robert Burns postage stamp in 1956 (below).



By the way, January 25th (his birthday) is **Robert Burns Day**, and as of this issue of *Whither Zither*, it is coming up soon. And all of January is **Robert Burns Month!!!**

You can download (or read online) a collection of his entire output of poetry and song free from **Project Gutenberg**,<sup>8</sup> as well as a collection of all his letters, and I think his letters are as fascinating as the rest of his output.

I agree with the sorely missed Scott Alarik; Burns' work is inspirational to songwriters, and thrilling to everyone who enjoys lyric, verse, and good writing in general.

#### SOURCES:

- 1 <https://scottalarik.com/blog/stories/Articles/32>
- 2 <https://www.forbes.com/forbes-life-magazine/1999/1030/059.html?sh=3bc050e65936>
- 3 <https://movingimage.nls.uk/film/7076>
- 4 <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/oct/06/bob.dylan.robert.burns.inspiration>
- 5 <https://theorkneynews.scot/2017/03/13/abraham-lincoln-robert-burns/>
- 6 <https://study.com/academy/lesson/of-mice-and-men-the-poem-to-a-mouse-by-robert-burns.html>
- 7 <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18185903.burns-wasnt-right-side-arguments-womens-rights/>
- 8 <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

**"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**

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**Way #2 – unplugged**

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