

MadFolk News

TIM GRIMM KICKS OFF 2024

We are very excited to have our first performer for 2024, and our first performer of our 50th year of The Madison Folk Music Society to be Tim Grimm! Tim has played many times with MadFolk, not just on our concert stage, but on events sponsored by MadFolk like, Folk on State and Willy Street Fair. Unfortunately, the last time Tim was scheduled to play with us a serious snow storm in the Chicago area was so thick he could not make it thru in time for the show. So we have finally found a date that works for both of us and we are very happy to bring him back to our stage.

This time Tim will be bringing a few new albums since he last played for us, the most recent being release in 2023. Tim's newest album, THE LITTLE IN-BETWEEN (March 2023), is an evocative evolution from his previ-

ous albums - and his most personal to date, written in three intense months during the winter of 2021-22. This album traces his travel between the hills of southern Indiana and the Oklahoma prairie - and his internal journey from a rich past to an unexpected future - using a first-person voice in every song to illuminate.

For those who are familiar with Tim's music, I know we will see you there. For those new to Tim's show/music, I think this is a very good description: Tim Grimm is a bit of a Renaissance man in the performing arts world, forging a rich and varied career that blends his love of songwriting, travel, and acting in theatre, film and television. For most of his 25-year career as a storytelling balladeer in the tradition of John Prine, Woody Guthrie, and Bob Dylan, Tim has writ-

ten primarily about community, history, family, and social issues - often framed by his strong sense of place and the many years he spent on the family farm he built in rural Indiana. His songs are filled with rural characters and landscapes, written and sung with vivid warmth and intimacy.

Date: February 10, 2024
\$15 adv and \$18 at door? - you may want to buy in advance, as we anticipate a sell out show,
Tickets can be bought at <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/madisonfolkmusicsociety/1096095>
7:00 start time
North Street Cabret Room

OUR THANKS TO RON DENNIS

The Board of MadFolk would like to publicly thank Ron Dennis for all his work with MadFolk as he steps down this year from the board to spend more time with family and other endeavors. Many of you know Ron for running our sound at concerts, but he is SO much more than that! He has been on the board simultaneously with MadFolk, Wild Hog in the Woods, and the Shawano Festival for many years. He ran sound for every season of Folk on State, for at least 10 years

of Willy St Fair. Volunteered for many open mics, house concerts, the volunteer party for Willy St Fair, along with being a performer too. Ron joined the MadFolk board in the fall of 2005, and has been a wonderful contributor to keeping this organization running and moving forward. I know we will continue to see Ron at shows, and I know he will help out if we ask, because that is the kind of great human he is. When you next see him, make sure to thank him for his many years of service with

Madfolk and the music community as a whole. If you're lucky perhaps you see him at a breakfast somewhere and he will amaze you with his stories, not just with music but a most interesting life! Thanks Ron!

♪ The Board of MadFolk would like to send thanks out to all the members who have sent us year end contributions. These extra donations that come in really do count, and help keep us going as we enter into our 50 year of bringing folk music to the Madison area!



My Highway Home

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Complex, Not Complicated

My friend Jim Noble is an architect, inventor, and ipso-facto engineer. One of his designs was adapted by NASA to house an experiment that was towed behind a space shuttle on an orbital mission. How cool is that? He and I are both ardent fans of the space program, and of human exploration of our solar system, galaxy, and of interstellar space. We are both fascinated by the many extraordinary things humans have achieved, and the boundless things humans yet need to achieve, environmentally and otherwise. The world needs problem solvers who can work together, especially when it comes to environmental issues that touch on every aspect of human life and every society on this planet. We need big idea people. And we need people who know how to translate that into pragmatic process-driven solutions.

Jim Noble took me on a personally guided tour of the Johnson Space Center near Houston. As we were walking through the exhibits, he explained a great deal to me that that was not included in the kiosk write-ups about how and why certain things happened. He explained how specific problems were solved, and talked about some of the sub-processes (both successes and failures) that led to workable solutions.

At one point during our visit Jim asked me, "Do you understand the difference between complicated and complex?"

I said, "I think I do, but please explain it to me from your perspective."

Jim looked at me with a twinkle in his eye that suggested, maybe I did not in fact understand the difference. And patiently, with his beautiful Texan accent and graciousness, he dove into an explanation. This is what I remember him saying to me that day, while standing under a Saturn V rocket laying on its side at the Johnson Space Center.

Jim began, "Any great undertaking

is necessarily complex. There are many stages. A rocket has many stages from the time it launches until the capsule, satellite, scientific package, or other piece of hardware or habitat is doing what it was intended to do. Whether in orbit, on its way to the Moon or Mars, or out of our solar system, there are many stages. But every one of those stages is made up of thousands of parts and pieces, of hardware and constructed machinery, and required process. Each step and component is essential to the success of the process and the objective."

He continued, "Each one of those parts and pieces had to be invented and fabricated by people who understood their work with precision, and had an ability to grasp how their work would relate to the work of others. So, there are stages not just in the rocket, but in every part and piece, in every aspect of conception, creation, and assembly. At every stage in the process, there is trial and error as materials are tested, reconsidered based on experimentation, and re-created to compensate for unexpected outcomes. This is necessarily complex work. But it only becomes complicated when there are non-essential steps and stages included in the process. The job of a good inventor, designer, engineer, project coordinator, or fabricator is to remove every step of the process that does not NEED to be there. In this way, complicated is reduced to merely complex. It is the art of reducing a process to the most elemental and elegant number of steps required to meet the objective, while still doing so with reasonably assured outcomes and safety."

His implications were clear, though understated. And my take-away is ever unfolding.

We live in a necessarily complex world. But there is a lot we could do personally and collectively to make it less complicated. We can reduce complicated to merely complex. Whether putting people on the Moon or solving

problems of climate change, homelessness and poverty, or a lack of access to food, water, sanitary conditions, or healthcare. There is a way. There is always a way. If we get enough people working together for common purpose and check our egos at the door (and throughout the process), we can find solutions. Furthermore, just because we have not found the solution yet, does not mean that it does not exist. Persistence in the face of failure is not always foolhardy. Sometimes it's just common-sense scientific process, applied to things outside of obvious science.

I am a musician. I am a songwriter. I try with great effort in my art, in my performances, in my composing and songwriting to shine light on the stories of other people, sometimes in a precise moment of action or effort. Because it exemplifies a character trait that I respect and that could be emulated by more people.

I can write a song about a Labor strike, about racial justice, homelessness, about the Shoah (the Holocaust), about fisherman, immigration, about the wonders of love, the splendor of nature, or the enthusiastic joy of a child. But if it is not framed as an invitation into the story and the lives of other people, if it is not framed as an invitation

Continued on next page...

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

My Highway Home continued...

tion into ourselves, it falls short. Somehow a song, or the story that precedes a song needs to be an invitation - palms up and heart open - into a deeper consideration of something. Sometimes that something is joy! So, whimsy also has a place in the conversation.

I have been a story teller. I have been an advocate for all sorts of social work, causes, justice movements, and laborers. I have been an advocate through my music for human rights, civil rights, climate justice, and civil discourse. And I have been a singer of love songs and lullabies.

But I have also been a minister of sorts, not of a given faith practice but as a spiritual humanist, ever interested in letting the power music give people permission to feel whatever they need to feel, in order to eventually arrive at a place of increased hopefulness. Music, art, dance, poetry, theater, singing together, being together, being in nature, having a good meal in the company of good people, all of these things can lead to greater hopefulness. They can also lead to tears and release. Laughter and release. Discomfort and release. Awareness and Ah-Ha!

Art has the power to allow us to express what we do not know how to express in any other way, whether we have created the art or are witness to it and in the presence of it.

So, as a personal tool, as a personal practice, art is invaluable. But as a community practice, shared performance, shared singing, shared dancing, shared jamming, shared art of all forms can reconnect us to one another and to ourselves in unique and needed ways.

Music is the path I have chosen, it is what comes most naturally. And I see myself as a crafts-person engaged in an honorable trade. I am grateful for the skills and the tools I have been given and have been privileged to develop. I am grateful for the many people who have helped me along the way, who saw potential and passion in the same place and decided to support it within me. I am grateful to have grown up in a musical family where I was surrounded

by the ongoing and exploratory relationship that all of my older siblings had with music. I am grateful that I had the chance to go to a marvelous music conservatory and to study with other committed and accomplished practitioners of music, in all of its many forms. I am grateful for that diversity and the awareness of how BIG music is.

From the camaraderie I feel with other working musicians and artists, to the people like Jim Noble who share their world views and learned perspective with me, I continue to be a student. I am in the world, ever curious about nature, science, other cultures, other people, and what they know that I do not!

I was asked recently in an interview what my legacy might be? I am hard pressed to define it. In part because I sincerely hope that at 51, my best and most creative years are still in front of me. I hope that my capacity for organizing, problem solving, and collaboration is just finding its legs. I hope that I will be blessed to work with friends I don't yet know, in places I have yet to go, to be a part of exploring and helping to solve problems I cannot yet comprehend, or may not yet be aware of in this moment.

But I hope my legacy also includes some of the following: I hope my legacy begins and ends with a deep and abiding love for humanity in all of our failings and striving, in all of our dreams and successes. I hope that I am remembered as a lover of people. Because for all of the difficulties in the world and the people who seem to thrive on discord, my experience has been that the vast majority of people in the world are really decent. And given the chance to self-actualize, the chance to chase their dreams or dare to grow, most people will choose to do so. If I can encourage that in any way through my music, what a beautiful thing to have helped foster.

I hope that I am recognized for the thoughtful and purposeful songwriter that I am and that I aspire to continue becoming. I hope that more musicians will look at my life and career (unorth-

odox as it is even for the music industry), and consider that they too do not need to fit into a specific mold in order to have an extraordinary life making music and bringing goodness into the world.

I hope to be a bridgebuilder, a peace maker, a journalist of sorts through the music and stories I choose to put on stage and on my albums. I hope that part of my legacy is that more people are curious about the world around them and the people in it, and bother to know something about their neighbors. I hope that people understand that my purpose was never to win a Grammy. (Though it would be nice. HA!) My purpose was and is not commercial. My purpose is HUMAN. My process is relational, rather than transactional. My hope is to shine light on the good that I see in other people and in the world. And to lift up that goodness and reflect it back to the people who listen, that we all might see each other with less suspicion and greater hope for understanding and acceptance.

We may never witness the whole picture of what has been affected by our art or work. But we see evidence that people have been affected by our work in useful ways. And when someone is willing to share how they have been specifically impacted, through that one person we can reasonably see that many more people are being positively affected by our efforts.

I don't know what my legacy will be, but I hope it will be a legacy of hope. A discipline of hope. A hope carried forward by a lot of great music, good people, right relations, and productive collaborations. A hope that acknowledges complexity, while graciously side-stepping irrelevant complications. A belief that hope is not a Quixotic or Pollyannaish way of being. Rather, hope is how we find the strength to envision a world where positive change is possible, and in which we get to be a part of making that change happen.

~ Joe Jencks

HOLLOW - HANDSOME FAMILY
2023 - MILK & SCISSORS



Review by Kiki Schueler

If you've heard only one Handsome Family song before, it was probably "Far from Any Road." Their 2003 tune was used as the haunting theme to season one of HBO's True Detective, which likely led to it being used as Guns-n-Roses intro music on their 2014 tour, and definitely led to its appearance in an episode of the Simpsons. All that attention added up to nearly 80 million Spotify plays. In comparison, "Too Much Wine," which has been covered by Jeff Tweedy, Andrew Bird, and Phoebe Bridgers, only managed a paltry two million listens. Despite the long shadow cast by "Road," the rest of Brett and Rennie Sparks catalog is equally deserving of attention. The married couple is the core of the Handsome Family, with Rennie writing the words and Brett the music. They are joined on tour and in the studio by additional musicians. For their newest release Hollow, this includes David Gutierrez on mandolin, Alex McMahon on guitar, and Jason Toth on percussion. It is their eleventh studio album in a career spanning nearly three decades. When asked about their endurance, Rennie replied, "We're astonished to be breathing, let alone still be inspired to write songs and sing together. There's been a lot of smashed coffee cups in our house over the years, but we're still unable to resist the urge to make music."

On Hollow the Handsome Family mine the classic elements, with an emphasis on water, but through a decidedly dark lens.

"Invisible Man" may sound like a Western swing classic, twangy guitar and a chorus of layered vocals, but its imagery is more horror than hoedown. "Can you see your hands without bathing them in blood? Can you catch them in the light without picking up a gun?" Brett shiver-sings before imploring "Light your hands, light your hands, invisible man, light your hands." While the Handsome Family often deal in myths and fables, the water sources of Hollow are based on true stories. The mandolin drenched "The Oldest Water" rhapsodizes on the two-billion-year-old pool found in Ontario's Kidd Creek Mine. There are enough facts to be a Wikipedia entry, "The oldest known water, found deep in a mine, spent billions of years bubbling in brine. Miles below rock that old ocean flowed, full of microscopic creatures all together and all alone." You would think they would want to keep the idyllic "Shady Lake" to themselves, but a Google search places it right outside of their hometown of Albuquerque. Trout, owls, swans, turtles and snakes populate the blissful tune. Brett tests his range, particularly the high end, on the "who, who" of horned owls, while a wooden xylophone bubbles underneath the guitar.

Meanwhile the decidedly fictional bizarre business folk of "Skunks" offer one stop shopping for exterminators, dog walking, lawn care, rental cars, and dining, all under the umbrella plea, "Call us anytime at night, call us day or night." The circus and harpsichord tinged "King of Everything" is the record's lighthearted moment. The song mostly consists of repetitions of the title, but there's room for this Rennie classic, "And me in my chair, as the pills reach my brain. I call out to the bees, 'make honey from my pain.'" The record opens with "Joseph," whose equally intriguing lyrics came from a nightmare where she called out "Come into the circle Jo-

seph! There's no moon tonight." The rest of the song, especially "Look into the eyes of that old porcelain doll," could have been nicked from one of The Conjuring movies. The record closes with "Good Night," it's what passes for a lullaby in the Handsome Family house. Hearing "Time for Santa to sharpen his claws, time for skin walkers, time for the saw," isn't going to help anyone sleep, but that might be the point. All the better to entertain you.

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. www.facebook.com/pages/Madison-Folk-Music-Society/34497984835

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If you are on Facebook, please consider (if you have not already) "friending" or is it "liking" this page. Then when you are on this page you can invite others to "like" this page.

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



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

Annual Meeting

Saturday February 10th at 7pm - North Street Cabaret, Madison
\$15 advance / \$18 day of show

On the Air



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

.....
Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Dan Robinson, H



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 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 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](http://tunein.com) radio

Stuart Stotts

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

Misc

.....
Sea Shanty Sing @Roxy's Restobar -- 208 W. Main St, Stoughton
No experience necessary. Songbooks provided and songs taught. 7pm every second Tuesday.

Open Mic @Cargo Coffee -- 750 E. Washington Ave.
Brave the stage or enjoy the show every first and third Sunday, 5-7pm. Sign-up starts at 4:30pm

Open Mic @Java Cat -- 4221 Lien Rd.
Check out local talent at the cafe's new location on the last two Sundays of each month.

Old Time Jam
Monthly - 3rd Sunday of every month, 2 to 5pm
Location: Brix Cider, Mt Horeb
Coordinator: Greg Jones, 7771jones@gmail.com
Al Wilson, adwilson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

Madison Area Ukulele Initiative -- Singalongs 3rd Sunday 11am - 1:30pm
- for location visit www.MAUImadison.com

Venues



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

Cafe Carpe

CLOSED FOR MONTH OF JANUARY

- Fri, February 2nd - Arlen - @8:30pm - \$20



Wil-Mar Center
504 S. Brearly St.
wildhoginthewoods.org
608-233-5687

Wild Hog in the Woods

- Friday, January 5th at 7:30pm - Rich Baumann
- Friday, January 12th at 7:30pm - Frankie Pobar Lay
- Friday, January 19th at 7:30pm - Walter Burt
- Saturday, January 20th at 2pm - Hootenanny Sing-Along!
- Friday, January 26th at 7:30pm - Michael Bell

FOLKLORE VILLAGE ...passing it on

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

Folklore Village

- January 10th - February 28 - Wednesday 5:30pm - Nyckelharpa Tunes by Gås-Anders, with Becky Weis
- Thur, January 11th - English Country Dance Piano Part I (Beginner/Intermediate) with Amy McFarland (online, via Zoom)
- Sun, January 14th - Meet Danish Paper Cut Artist Torben Jarlstrøm Clausen (online, via Zoom)
- Thur, January 18th - English Country Dance Piano Part II (Intermediate/Advanced) with Amy McFarland (online, via Zoom)

Gigs

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 - Admission for all concerts is \$20 entirely for musicians

- Friday, January 26th @7:30 pm - LVDY
- Saturday, February 17th @7:30 pm - Sarah Peacock and Danni Nichols

Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Kiki at

righteousmusicgmt@gmail.com

- Friday, January 20th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Jason Narducy with Strings - \$25 (Full)
- Sunday, January 27th @ 6pm (doors at 5) Jon Langford/Sally Timms/John Szymanski/Martin Billheimer special guest Gerald Dowd - \$20 (Full)

“A storytelling balladeer in the tradition of John Prine, Woody Guthrie, and Bob Dylan, Tim has the gift of being moving, intimate and robustly honest without being slushy and over-sentimental.



Madison Folk Music Society PRESENTS
Tim Grimm

Saturday, February 10

7:00 pm

THE NORTH STREET CABARET, 610 North St, Madison WI

Tickets \$15 advance, \$18 day of show

Available at: <https://buytickets.at/madisonfolkmusicsociety/1096095>

Non-perishable donations of food will be collected for local food banks.



"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

Complete, clip, and mail this form

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

Madison Folk Music Society

P.O. Box 665, Madison, WI 53701

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Madison Folk Music Society

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Choose membership category:

Senior / Student \$12 _____

Regular \$15 _____

Family \$20 _____

Friend \$25 _____

Contributing \$50 _____

Life \$500 _____

Scholarship fund donation (optional) \$ _____

Total \$ _____

GOING GREEN - Send my newsletters electronically by email

Send your check, payable to MFMS to: Mad Folk c/o

Tracy Comer, P.O. Box 930446 Verona, WI 53593-0446