

Mad Folk News

Weave and Spin

By Emily Beebe

I love a good yarn. My mother was keen on crocheting afghans, an activity demanding a quantitative approach toward crafting. Each blanket required a large Hess's department store shopping bag filled with brightly colored skeins. Her yarn of choice was whatever K-Mart was selling on blue light special, which was invariably worsted weight acrylic.

The texture of this yarn was a cross between baling twine, and huskie fur fresh from a warm tumble dry (note: no dogs were harmed in the creation of this column). Elegant, no, but it was washable, making it the perfect medium for

toilet seat cozies and children's bedspreads.

Acrylic was also resistant to moths. Nevertheless, my parents stored these home-made blankets in a closet filled with mothballs during summer blanket hibernation season. The Red Heart fibers reacted covalently with the pungent camphor molecules, and when the weather turned cold, they would slowly release soft clouds of pi electrons as we slept. Our Wintertime dreams were filled with visions of bug zappers, chlorinated swimming pools, and Sucrets throat lozenges.

I learned to crochet sitting across the table from Mom when I

was twelve. My first couple granny squares were enthralling and allowed me to listen to my older sibling's Jethro Tull and Bob Dylan albums while I looped. By the time I turned thirteen, I had lost interest in fiber arts and moved on to other age-appropriate activities, like playing rhythm and blues on my brothers Les Paul knock-off electric guitar or poring over my sister's Beatles album covers looking for evidence of Paul McCartney's demise. I wasn't smart enough to wire our turntable to play Magical Mystery Tour backwards, so I never learned if this conspiracy theory

Column continues on next page...



We'll Sing with You, Robbie

Robbie Clement was an integral member of Mad Folk back in the 90s and beyond. Robbie was a talented folksinger, songwriter, and performer all over the state. He released several recordings that featured his clear tenor voice, his solid guitar and banjo playing, and a mix of traditional, contemporary, and original songs. Robbie's cover of Waltzing with Bears was one of the songs he brought to the world's attention. Robbie passed

away on February 27th of this year. He wasn't as active performing in the last ten or fifteen years, but his love for music remained as strong as ever. Stuart Stotts, Ken Lonquist, and Tom Pease recorded a tribute to Robbie that's now available on the streaming services. Called "We'll Sing with You, Robbie," it honors a life of singing and sharing music. Robbie was a great and generous spirit whose music will live on.



...Column continued...

was true. (I'm also still not real sure about walruses.) I did find an early prototype of Waldo (Pauldo?) on the cover of an early edition Sargent Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, masquerading as one of the Shirley Temples.

Years later as a parent of small children I rediscovered the old H hook and tried to relax by making baby blankets for expecting friends and relatives while watching the evening news. Our kids were toddlers by then and were busy teaching themselves how to reverse-wire record players. Those blankets came out as tight as tatami and so small that they could almost line a chihuahua-sized pet taxi.

Chris has quite a collection of vinyl records, so he suggested we listen to those to reduce tension on long winter evenings. Once our little angels were in bed and we had finished sweeping up broken heirlooms or removing silverware from CD drives, we sat down to enjoy everything from Huddie Ledbetter to Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte to Planxty, and Theodore Bikel and Guela Gill singing folk songs from just about everywhere. This was a relaxing pastime, but I still needed something safe to do with my hands that wasn't rolling homemade ciga-

rillos or writing letters to Congress.

When the arty yarn store opened in town, I realized for the first time that yarn could be soft and pleasant to handle. I bought some dainty circular needles and two small skeins to make hats for my adult friends for the holidays as we listened to Amahl and the Night Visitors

and the Chieftain's Bells of Dublin. The kids and their dolls ended up getting a lot of snug little hats from Santa that year. No matter what those helpful knitting books said, my gauge always came out as if it was measured in Imperial units when the rest of the world had switched to metric. If NASA designed rockets using knitting needles, I would have been the engineer that hurtled the Climate Orbiter into the red dusty surface of Mars.

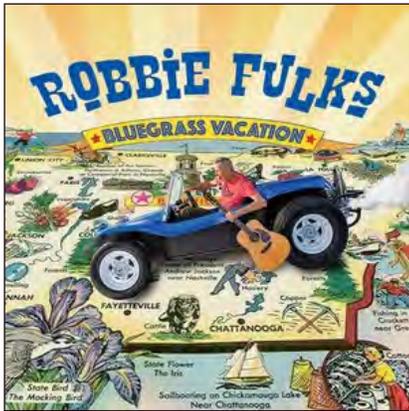
There was something about working with yarn and needles that really opened my mind to music and encouraged real listening. Our Cat Stevens Mona Bone Jakon album was in rough shape and would skip at the same place every time we listened to it. Trouble please be-Trouble please be-



Trouble please be-Trouble please be – zipp- kind. I found I would also invariably slip a stitch, as if awoken from a trance to get up and move the diamond tipped needle to the next plastic groove before I could move my double-pointed bamboo needles back to the groove of knitting warm socks.

Our children somehow survived into adulthood and escaped to big cities with reliable internet and a greater population of peers than deers. The needles and hooks have since been stashed in exchange for musical instruments, although the vinyl still gets taken out for a spin now and again. I credit the repetition of knit one purl two and 52-count chain stitches to my ability to listen deeply to music. I hear something new with each playing, even from recordings that have been spun hundreds of times. I take great delight when I see someone at a session or a concert pull out a skein of yarn and start knitting. Occupied hands represent a mind that is relaxed and free to wander through the music and tap into unrealized creativity: busy fingers, open ears, full heart, and someone special will be getting a snazzy new sweater.





Review by Kiki Schueler

If you feel like Robbie Fulks' music has been getting more serious, you wouldn't be wrong. After all, it has been 27 years since "The Scrapple Song," a hilarious ode to Pennsylvania's favorite mystery meat, and the lighthearted tale of celebrity suicide "She Took a Lot of Pills (and Died)" from his debut. 2013's *Gone Away Backwards* and its follow-up, the Grammy nominated *Upland Stories*, are excellent records both, but, with the exception of the wink, wink, nudge, nudge "Aunt Peg's New Old Man" from the latter, for the most part sobering. This is not to say he's forgotten how to have fun. *Wild, Wild, Wild*, his record with Linda Gale Lewis from 2018, is a rollicking rockabilly throwdown. If you were to judge a record by its cover, the new *Bluegrass Vacation*, whose cover features Fulks hot-rodding across a map of Tennessee, is going to be an excellent time. One way he insures that is by assembling an astounding cast of musicians: legendary (Sam Bush, Tim O'Brien), up and comers (Sierra Hull), and frequent collaborators (Shad Cobb, Scott Simontacchi, Todd Phillips). And that is, literally, just to name a few. The songs are by turns silly, smart, serious, stripped down, fully dressed, lyrically dense, instrumental, two minutes brief, and five and half expansive. One thing they all are is bluegrass.

Opening track, and the record's first single, "One Glass of Whiskey" puts banjo, fiddle, and alcohol, front and center.

It must be powerful stuff, "One glass of whiskey to ease my mind, and another one to take it too far away to find." Cobb's crazy fiddling, and Wes Corbett's and Ronnie McCoury's furious picking (banjo and mandolin respectively) propel the song along so fast, you'd have a hard time getting more than one swallow before the song ends. And if you thought that was fast, wait till you get to "Let the Old Dog In," it leaves scorch marks. Fulks passes guitar duties to the Punch Brothers Chris Eldridge, and he proves equal to the task. John Cowan of New Grass Revival adds noteworthy backing vocals, joining Fulks in begging for forgiveness, while Cobb once again shoots off sparks. "Longhair Bluegrass" feels like a Fulks origin story as he tells of attending a festival with his parents that changed his life. "It seemed every picker in the USA had landed in a Culpepper field that day, fifty years gone and I'm still grooving on the scene." His new label's co-owner Alison Brown takes the banjo part, while Bush plays mandolin and sings. It also has something to say about stereotypes, "What's it matter how a fella looks if his song is true and his playing cooks."

The terrific Brennan Leigh stops in to lend her gorgeous voice to several songs. The first is "Molly & the Old Man," a sentimental tune about a father-daughter band. She's there for the beautifully minimalist Fulks/Cobb banjo duet "Sweet Li'l Cora-Mae." And again on the record's emotional center "Momma's Eyes," which chronicles a parent's tragic descent into dementia. Be careful about listening too closely, it's a tearjerker. "If there's a god in heaven does he pay us any mind? If it's a story we're living why is the author so unkind?" The record's closing track could not be more perfect. Just Fulks and a banjo reflecting that "Old Time Music Is Here to Stay."

To hear him tell it, it's inevitable, "Then those old songs get down in your bones, you just let your fingers play." In the liner notes Fulks explains how early in his career he left Greg Cahill's Special Consensus, thinking there were other things he wanted to do in music. "But what made me think there was anything cooler than bluegrass?" he asks. I don't know the answer, but I can tell you in the case of *Bluegrass Vacation*, absolutely nothing is cooler.

Mad Folk News is published monthly by the Madison Folk Music Society, a non-profit, volunteer-led society dedicated to fostering folk music in the Madison area.

Contact us at madfolk@charter.net. Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at www.madfolk.org.

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The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

June 2023

Mad Folk Events



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

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

Gigs

Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Kiki at righteousmusicmgmt@gmail.com

• Friday, June 16th @ 8pm (doors at 7) Eyelids - \$15

Common Chord and Bob's Your Uncle

• Sunday ~~June 18th~~ @ 3pm: Common Chord (July 2)

@ Brix Cider, Mt. Horeb

• Saturday June 10 @ 2 pm: Bob's Your Uncle

@ Black Hawk Folk Society, Wautoma WI

• Friday June 16 @ 6:30 pm: Bob's Your Uncle

@ Mariner's

• Saturday June 17 @ 6:30 pm: Bob's Your Uncle

@ Mariner's

• Thursday June 29 @ 6:30 pm: Bob's Your Uncle

@ Bullquarian Brewhouse, Monroe

• Monday July 10 @ 5pm: Common Chord

@ Good Shepherd Church "Music Mondays"

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

• Saturday, June 17th @6:30 pm - Ruper Wates - \$20

• Friday, July 7th @6:30 pm - Patchouli - \$20

• Thursday, August 10th @6:30 pm - Joe Crookston - \$20



Wild Hog in the Woods

• Friday, September 8th at 7:30pm - Lil' Rev

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

Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise.
Please call 920-563-9391 to reserve.

• Fri, June 2nd, Harmonious Wail - \$20 - @8pm

• Sat, June 3rd, Todd Albright - @8pm - \$15

• Thu, June 8th, Joe Jencks w/ Heather Styka - \$25 - @8pm

• Fri, June 9th, Lost Souls - @8pm - \$12

• Sat, June 10th, Mark Dvorak / Jim Craig / Bill Camplin @8pm - \$15

• Thu, June 15th, Shitunauts - \$35 - @8pm

• Fri, June 16th, Shitunauts - \$35 - @8pm

• Sat, June 17th, Shitunauts - \$35 - @8pm

• Sun, June 18th, Shitunauts - \$35 - @7pm

• Sat, June 24th, Dave Ramont & Gerald Dowd



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

Misc

Old Time Jam

Monthly - 3rd Sunday of every month, 3 to 6pm

Location is variable for now. Please email or call to get on the mailing list

Coodinator: Al Wilson, adwilson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

cell: 608-572-0634

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

On the Air



wpr.org

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.



wortfm.org

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 - Green Morning Radio 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 radio

Stuart Stotts

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

Venues

FOLKLORE VILLAGE

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

Folklore Village

• Tue, June 6th - Online Open Mic Night @7pm

• June 6th - 11th - Folk School Session 1

• Sat, June 10th - Healthy Hoedown - The Barley Brothers w/ caller Sean Fen - 6pm Potluck; Dancint @7:15 \$10 adults, \$8 seniors & teens, \$5 kids (under 5 free)

• Sat, June 17th - Schoolhouse Social - \$6pm potluck \$10 adults, \$8 seniors & teens, \$5 kids (under 5 free)

• Tue, June 20th - In-Person Open Mic Night @7pm (sign-up @6:45pm)

NORTH STREET CABARET

610 North St, Madison, WI
northstreetcabaret.com

Sugar Maple Concert Series

• Thurs, July 6th - Nick Dumas & Branchline @7:30pm - \$15 adv / \$22 d.o.s.

• Thurs, July 20th - Mean Mary Solo Banjo @7:30pm - \$15 adv / \$22 d.o.s.

• Sun, August 6th - Kristin Andreassen & Chris Eldridge @7pm - \$20 adv / \$30 d.o.s.

• Fri, September 15th - Viv & Riley @8pm - \$15 adv / \$22 d.o.s.

"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

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Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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

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Life \$500 _____
Scholarship fund donation (optional) \$ _____
Total \$ _____

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