

Mad Folk News

John McCutcheon At the Barrymore Nov 3

♪ Come out to a special concert at the Barrymore, when we welcome one of Wisconsin's native sons home for a special night.

“He has an uncanny ability to breathe new life into the familiar. His storytelling has the richness of fine literature.”

— Washington Post

No one remembers when the neighbors started calling the McCutcheons to complain about the loud singing from young John's bedroom. It didn't seem to do much good, though. For, after a shaky, lopsided battle between piano lessons and baseball (he was a mediocre pianist and an all-star catcher), he had “found his voice” thanks to a cheap mail-order guitar and a used book of chords.

From such inauspicious beginnings, John McCutcheon has emerged as one of our most respected and loved folksingers. As an instrumentalist, he is a master of a dozen different traditional instruments, most notably the rare and beautiful hammered dulcimer. His songwriting has been hailed by critics and singers around the globe. His thirty recordings have garnered every imaginable honor including seven Grammy nominations. He has produced over twenty albums of other artists, from traditional fiddlers to contemporary singer-songwriters to educational and documentary works. His books and instructional materials have introduced budding

players to the joys of their own musicality. And his commitment to grassroots political organizations has put him on the front lines of many of the issues important to communities and workers.

Even before graduating summa cum laude from Minnesota's St. John's University, this Wisconsin native literally “headed for the hills,” forgoing a college lecture hall for the classroom of the eastern Kentucky coal camps, union halls, country churches, and square dance halls. His apprenticeship to many of the legendary figures of Appalachian music imbedded a love of not only home-made music, but a sense of community and rootedness. The result is music...whether traditional or from his huge catalog of original songs...with the profound mark of place, family and strength. It also created a storytelling style that has been compared to Will Rogers and Garrison Keillor.

“The most impressive instrumentalist I've ever heard.”

— Johnny Cash

The Washington Post described John as folk music's “Rustic Renaissance Man,” a moniker flawed only by its understatement. “Calling John McCutcheon a ‘folksinger’ is like saying Deion Sanders is just a football player...” (Dallas Morning News). Besides his usual circuit of major concert halls and theaters, John is equally at home in an elementary school auditorium, a festival stage or at a farm rally. He is a whirl-

“Calling John McCutcheon a ‘folksinger’ is like saying Deion Sanders is just a football player.”

— Dallas Morning News

wind of energy packing five lifetimes into one. In the past few years alone he has headlined over a dozen different festivals in North America (including repeated performances at the National Storytelling Festival), recorded an original composition for Virginia Public Television involving over 500 musicians, toured Australia for the sixth time, toured Chile in support of a women's health initiative, appeared in a Woody Guthrie tribute concert in New York City, gave a featured concert at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, taught performance art skills at a North Carolina college, given symphony pops concerts across America, served as president of the fastest-growing local in the Musicians Union and performed a special concert at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. This

is all in his “spare time.” His “real job,” he's quick to point out, is father to two grown sons.

But it is in live performance that John feels most at home. It is what has brought his music into the lives and homes of one of the broadest audiences any folk musician has ever enjoyed. People of every generation and background seem to

John McCutcheon Cont.

feel at home in a concert hall when John McCutcheon takes the stage, with what critics describe as “little feats of magic,” “breathtaking in their ease and grace...,” and “like a conversation with an illuminating old friend.”

John McCutcheon

Saturday, November 3, 2012

7:00 pm


Barrymore Theatre, 2090 Atwood Ave., Madison

Tickets: \$18 advance/\$20 day of show

Advance tickets from the Barrymore only

www.barrymorelive.com

Mad Folk Concert Tickets

When you see this symbol –  – you’ll know that you’re reading about a Mad Folk sponsored event. Advance tickets for Mad Folk shows are available online at www.madfolk.org and at these outlets:

- Orange Tree Imports, 1721 Monroe Street
- Spruce Tree Music, 851 East Johnson

Purchase tickets ONLINE for Mad Folk concerts via Brown Paper Tickets:

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/producer/10879>

You can also purchase advance tickets by mail. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope with your check payable to Mad Folk, PO Box 665, Madison, WI 53701. If all else fails, call 608-846-9214 for information.

February Sky playing house concert November 9

Susan Urban and Phil Cooper, performing together as February Sky, will be doing a house concert on Friday, November 9 at 8 PM at the home of Mike Tuten & Carol Huber.

Phil sings and plays his own arrangements of traditional songs and tunes on six string guitar and cittern, and he also interprets a number of carefully chosen songs from the best of modern folk song writers. Susan Urban is a writer of story songs and humorous “slice of life” songs. She accompanies her

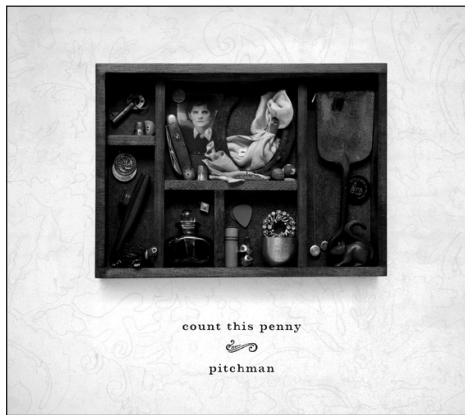
singing on guitar, six string banjo, mountain dulcimer, and hand percussion instruments. Although Phil and Susan have been in different bands over the years, while occasionally appearing together for an on-stage song swap, in 2007 they formed the duo “February Sky.” Their goal in this band is to present carefully arranged versions of old and new songs addressing the widest possible range of human experience, complete with vocal harmony, intricate instrumentation and thoughtful stagecraft. Joy, sorrow, humor, tragedy – since

the dawn of humanity, listening to and participating in the experience of music has been a way for folk to process and live through whatever life might bring their way. For more information and a sample of their music visit their website: www.februarysky.com

To reserve a seat for this event you may email Mike and Carol at mnchu2101@charter.net or give them a call at 608 274-6340. A \$10 donation will be collected at the door

PITCHMAN

COUNT THIS PENNY ~ 2012 SELF-RELEASED



Review by Kiki Schueler

If my word count for CD reviews was limited to one instead of five hundred (more or less), this review of Pitchman, the new CD by Count This Penny (Amanda and Allen Rigell), would simply read “gorgeous.” And the single most gorgeous thing on Pitchman is Amanda Rigell’s voice. It’s at once elegant and everyday, exotic and familiar. Any song that features her lead vocals instantly jumps to the front of the line, and never is that more true than on the instantly memorable title track. I had the chorus rattling around in my head for weeks after the first time I heard it live. The recorded version is likewise intense. Every instrument is crystal clear, from John Henry’s lullaby violin to John Ray’s buoyant banjo. Like a dream date, not only is it pretty, but it’s smart too. There’s a quotable line in every verse, from “Your silver tongue could cut your own throat” in verse one to “I ain’t saying you lied, just that I believed you, you know the two aren’t always the same” in the second. And then there’s that unforgettable chorus, “You ain’t nothing but a pitchman, you ain’t nothing but a talker, selling snake oil made of holy water.” Whatever

they are selling, I’m buying.

The good news is that there are eight more tracks on Pitchman, and they are just as revelatory as the title track. “Big Tall Pines” is another standout Amanda composition, so pretty it takes a few listens before you realize it’s actually not just a love song but also a murder ballad. Of course, all the great murder ballads start with a broken heart, and if it doesn’t end with a homicide, then it’s a suicide. Such is the case of Allen Rigell’s “Mountain.” There’s no missing this song’s dark intentions, not when it opens with the line “It’s been ten years to the day since we went fishing, I never knew you had a gun. They found your body by the old smokestacks, that shirt you wear blistered by the sun.” As in the classic “Long Black Veil,” that ten years is important; despite the passing of a decade, every detail of that day is still vivid and unspools dramatically over the course of five minutes. That song and the equally dark “Mountain” reveal themselves over the course of several listens. It may be Amanda’s voice that hooks you, but Allen’s songs keep you addicted. “Mother” proves a perfect ending, balancing the record by ending with a true duet, which sounds like an old traditional, co-written by the couple.

Count This Penny has been in Madison only a few years, moving here from east Tennessee, but they have made it their home very quickly. Not only have they amassed quite a following of fans and friends, but many of their new friends are some of Madison’s best musicians, who lend a hand on the record. The similarly folk-centric Evan Murdock adds a very effective mandolin to “Pines” and “Mother,” while Andrew

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Harrison’s always excellent pedal steel haunts “Mountain” and the title track. Pitchman was the last record made at Madison’s legendary Smart Studios, and to hear Amanda tell it, it sounds like they were dismantling the studio around them. For almost three decades the studio has been at the center of the city’s local music scene as well as producing records that received national attention. It sure would be nice if its final recording was both.



Jimmy Driftwood and Ralph Emery

In earlier columns, I've spoken of one of my songwriting inspirations, Jimmy Driftwood (1907-1998) of Mountain View, Arkansas. Driftwood is best known for writing **The Battle of New Orleans**, which was a huge hit for Johnny Horton in 1959, but he wrote thousands of songs, and knew scores of traditional pieces. I only saw him in person once, at a folk festival in Minnesota in the mid sixties. He was marvelous. I wish I had worked up the courage to talk with him then, or in the following years; he died in 1998.

Recently I came upon a 2003 interview by Dr. Brooks Blevins of Missouri State University, with a folk musician named Glen Branscum (1928-2011). Branscum, also of Mountain view, was a lifelong friend and traveling companion of Jimmy Driftwood. He helped build and was manager, since Driftwood's death, of the Jimmy Driftwood Barn, a museum and music performance hall in Mountain View.

In this interview, Mr. Branscum explains that Nashville radio DJ Ralph Emery helped to bring Jimmy Driftwood's **Battle of New Orleans** to the attention of Johnny Horton:

Johnny Horton... Well, he was going somewhere to perform that night... Ralph Emery, he put that on his radio program that night, and it was late in the night... He thought, 'Well, it had hell and damn in it,' you know, and that's the reason the radio people, the disc jockeys, wouldn't play it... So Ralph Emery just put it on there anyhow. Johnny Horton, he heard it and heard Jimmy sing it, and... He called old Ralph Emery up and said, "I gotta get this one..."

I've been a fan of Ralph Emery's interviews for years, first when he was host of the Nashville Network's **Nashville Now**, and more recently on the weekly **Ralph Emery Live** on RFD-TV, though his broadcasting career stretches way back to 1951. In 2007 he was inducted

into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

I sent a thank-you email to Mr. Emery in August. I realized that had it not been for his courage as a DJ, I never may have been inspired by Driftwood, and hence may not have become a songwriter.

To my delight, Ralph Emery wrote back:

Peter, Jimmy Driftwood once told me that the song evolved out of an old square dance call. All he had to start with was "We fired our guns and the British came a coming." Did you also know that Columbia records in the interest of profits had Horton re-record the song for the British and Canadian markets. In the revised version THE BRITISH WON THE BATTLE... How's that for greed. When Jimmy heard about it he went to Andy Jackson's grave and cried for forgiveness tho he had nothing to do with it. Just thought you would like these side bars. All the best, Ralph Emery

I had no idea! Rewriting a song and rewriting history at the same time! Driftwood must have freaked. I wrote and thanked Mr. Emery again and asked if I could quote him in WZ. He replied,

Peter...I don't mind being quoted... I believe the second version is in a Johnny Horton boxed set. New lines..."In 1814 we took a little trip along with Colonel Packerham up the mighty Mississippi. We took a little bacon and we took a little beans and we met the blooming rebels in the town of New Orleans." Both versions said, "We fired our guns and the (British or Rebels, take your pick) kept a coming, But there wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago." Since the rebels were defending against the advancing British, that line got dicey. Andy Jackson is buried here in Nashville at his Hermitage mansion. Remember, Jimmy Driftwood was a history teacher and invested a lot of his soul in this song... Hope this helps. Best, Ralph Emery

Again I expressed my gratitude, and Mr. Emery wrote this final explanation and clarification of the situation:

*Peter. Let me tell you a story. Don Warden is the publisher of "The Battle of New Orleans." He sold the foreign rights to Wesley Rose of the Acuff-Rose publishing company. Wesley took the idea of a British version to Mitch Miller, then head of A and R at Columbia records. Without telling Don or Jimmy Driftwood they took Horton into a studio and made the record for the Canadian and British markets. By the time Don heard about it was too late. Don also said, to his embarrassment, they put his name on it as co-writer. Bottom line—The record stiffed. Did not do well at all. I suppose the public thought the whole idea was silly. By the way—Don Warden was an original member of the Porter Waggoner trio. When Porter and Dolly split Don went with Dolly as her road manager. Tho no longer her road manager, he still works as head of her Nashville operation. A really nice guy. It was Don who first heard that Johnny Horton was looking for a follow up to [his 1958 hit] **When it's Springtime in Alaska** and sent the Driftwood song to Johnny and his manager Tillman Franks. They turned it down. Finally, when they realized the song was in my top ten at WSM they changed their minds about the song's potential. Because Columbia records sensed a trend, they released **Soldiers Joy** by Hawkshaw Hawkins, **10 thousand drums** by Carl Smith and **Ballad Of the Blue and Grey** by Lefty Frizzell. None of them were hits. As Paul Harvey would say, THAT'S THE REST OF THE STORY. Best, Ralph Emery*

All goes to show that "sensing a trend" was no easier then than it is now, also that a song is rarely popular just because of its theme; it has to be a good song.

It was a heady excitement for me to receive these personal emails from one person I admire so much regarding another person I admire so much. My deep thanks to Ralph Emery for taking the time to send me these fascinating notes. Hats off too to Brooks Blevins and Glen Branscum and, of course, Jimmy Driftwood.

--WZ Nov '12

LINKS

RFD-TV's Ralph Emery Live:

www.rfdtv.com/shows/music_&_entertainment/ralph_emery_live/
Brooks Blevins' interview of Glen Branscum about Jimmy Driftwood:
web.lyon.edu/groups/mslibrary/rcol/branscum.htm

Also, do Google, YouTube, and Amazon searches for Jimmy Driftwood.

“John McCutcheon is not only one of the best musicians in the USA, but also a great singer, songwriter, and song leader.” – *Pete Seeger*



Photo by
Irene Young

The Madison Folk Music Society &
Wisconsin Public Radio - Simply Folk *present*
AN EVENING WITH

John McCutcheon

Saturday, November 3

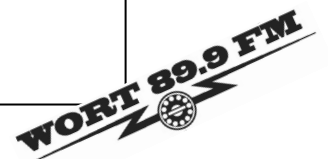
7:00 pm

Barrymore Theatre

2090 Atwood Avenue

Tickets \$18 advance, \$20 day of show

Available at: www.madfolk.org,
Spruce Tree Music, Orange Tree Imports



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

The Mad Folk Refrigerator Cover

November 2012

Mad Folk Events



John McCutcheon

Saturday, November 3
Barrymore Theatre -- 2090 Atwood Ave
\$18 adv / \$20 d.o.s.

Garnet Rogers

Friday, January 18
The Brink Lounge -- 701 E. Washington Ave -- 7pm
\$15 adv / \$17 d.o.s.

Venues



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

Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise

- Thu, Nov 1 -- Michael McDermott -- 8pm -- \$10
- Sat, Nov 3 -- Mike Dowling -- \$8 -- \$10
- Thu, Nov 8 -- New Pioneers -- \$8 -- 7pm
- Fri, Nov 9 -- The Jokes
- Sat, Nov 10 -- Bill Camplin & The Reconnected Vermin -- \$8
- Fri, Nov 16 -- Jenn & Basho -- \$8
- Sat, Nov 17 -- The Wrong Omar -- \$7.50
- Sat, Nov 24 -- Small Potatoes



701 E. Washington
thebrinklounge.com
608-661-8599

The Brink Lounge

- Tue, Nov 6 -- Brandon Beebe / Field & James -- \$10 donation
- Tue, Nov 13 -- Tracy Jane Comer - Acoustic Alloy
- Tue, Nov 20 -- Dakota Winddance at 7 pm
Mark Atkins and Subvocal at 8 pm -- \$10 donation



FOLKLORE VILLAGE Folklore Village

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

- Sat, Nov 10 -- "My Life in Country Music" feat. Bill C. Malone & Corey Hart
-- 7:30pm -- \$25 minimum donation

Irish Cultural & Heritage Center
2133 W Wisconsin Ave
Milwaukee, WI -- ichc.net
414-345-8800

ICHC

- Sat., Nov. 10-- Paddy Keenan --
7:30pm -- \$12 d.o.s. -- Students \$10 w/ ID
- Sat., Dec 1-- Irish Christmas in America --
7:30pm -- \$21 adv. / \$25 d.o.s.
-- Students \$10 w/ ID

Gigs

SASHA MERCEDES House Concert (CD Release tour)
Tuesday, November 20, 2012 - 7:30pm until 9:30pm

Hosted by M. Weiser and K. Stevenson at 4506 Hamlet Circle, Madison, WI 53714 (far east side off of Milwaukee St.)

Susan Urban and Phil Cooper, performing together as February Sky, will be doing a house concert on Friday, November 9 at 8 PM at the home of Mike Tuten & Carol Huber

Anne Heaton & Natalia Zukerman -- Mon, Nov 5 -- 7:00 PM
Suggested Donation: \$20 -- <http://www.thebarnatlagrange.com>

Misc

Friday, Nov 2 Maighread Ní Dhomhnaill & Dáithí Sproule, song and guitar. House concert, 7:30pm. Near westside, Madison.

Friday, November 9th 7:30pm, Paddy Keenan Uilleann pipes, low whistle & guitar

See the Sly Dog ~ Madtown Blog for information and how to get an invitation.

Heather Dale's "An Ancient Yule" Tour -- Tue, Nov 20 -- 7pm -- \$10adv/\$15atd at Pegasus Games "Playground" 6636 Odana Rd, Madison
Tickets available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/288039>

Madison Ukulele Club -- Singalongs 1st and 3rd Weds 7:00-9:00pm -- call for location -- 246-8205 (Andrew)

Bob's BBQ Emporium's Open Mic - Thu, Nov 15 -- 7pm -- 8164 Hwy. 14 Arena, WI

Cajun jam held every first Sunday 2 p.m.-5 p.m.

At the Froth House: 11 N. Allen St., Madison We welcome all levels of experience with instruments and Cajun music.

kcholden@wisc.edu for more info. www.prairiebayoucajun.com

On the Air



wpr.org

Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Stephanie Elkins, Interim 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.



wort-fm.org

WORT 89.9 FM community radio

Sun -- 3:00-5:00pm

- On the Horizon (world music) w/Ford Blackwell, Paul Novak & Dan Talmo
- Weekdays 9:00am-noon
- Mon - Global Revolutions (folk from the world over) w/ David & Martin Alvarado & Eugenia Highland
- Tue -- For the Sake of the Song (traditional American folk) w/Jim Schwall
- 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

WSUM 91.7 student radio

- Sun, 9am-10am -- Exiles Return w/ Elizabeth Delaquess

Madison Dance

- African/African-American Dance classes with live drumming -- Sun, 7:00-9:00pm -- Metro Dance, 3009 University Ave. -- 255-3677 / 251-4311
- Cajun Strangers- Sun 11/18 - Knuckledown Saloon, Madison. -- 6pm Donation
- SpiritMoves Ecstatic Dance 2nd and 4th Weds, 7:00-9:00 pm -- The Center for Conscious Living, 849 East Washington Ave. -- \$7 min. donation
- English Country Dance taught -- 1st and 3rd Mon, 7:30-9:30pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 238-9951 or 238-9951
- International Dancing -- Wed and Sun; classes 7:30-8:30pm, request dancing 8:30-11:00pm -- The Crossing, 1127 University Ave. -- 241-3655
- Irish Dancing -- Monthly Ceili and set dance events are posted at celticmadison.org/dance
- Italian Dancing -- Tue, 7:00-9:00pm, no experience or partner necessary -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 838-9403 (Philana)
- Madison Contra Dance Cooperative -- Tue; 7:30 jam band practice, intermediate level dancing 7:45-9:40pm -- \$5 for non-members -- Gates of Heaven, 302 E. Gorham -- 238-3394 (Steve)
- Morris Dancing -- Wed, 7:00pm -- call for location -- 238-9951
- Scottish Country Dancing -- Sun, 7:00pm -- Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer St. -- 835-0914

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