
Mad Folk NEWS

Newsletter of the Madison Folk Music Society

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Joe Jencks, tenor with heart, at Wil-Mar Saturday, Feb. 17

Joe Jencks will be the featured Madison Folk Music Society performer Saturday, February 17, at 8 p.m. at the WilMar Center. He will be accompanied by guest Elisa Korenne.

Pete Seeger has said of Joe, "The key to the future is people joining in. The music of Joe Jencks captures this essential spirit. Joe is a fantastic singer who carries on the tradition." Charlie King says, "Listen to Joe! A clear tenor voice; a heart that's in the right place, close to the skin, a sense of justice tempered by a sense of humor, and a CD that captures it all in rich, tasty accompaniments. How can you go wrong?"

Come see for yourself why Mad Folk was so keen to bring him for a full concert, after playing at Folk on State for several summers.

Joe's latest CD, *Rise As One*, is a live solidarity concert recording done for the Folklore Society of Greater Wash-

ington, D.C., full (20 tracks!) of songs of working men and women. It includes such classics as the Miner's Union "Step



by Step," "John Henry," and Woody Guthrie's "Deportees" but also songs Joe has written of contemporary struggles, including "Christmas in

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FOCUS ON FOLK

A Look at songwriting with Stephen Lee Rich

Q: How did you start writing songs?

A: When I was 15 years old almost everyone I knew of the same age wanted to be a musician. That was the 1960s, the era during which the very idea of the singer/songwriter had just come into being; if you were going to sing, it was taken for granted you'd need to write some degree of your own material.

Strangely enough, my first song was not of love or adolescent angst. It was political an anti-war song. The Vietnam war was still a going concern and the possibility of being sent off to die, in three years or so, to support the profit margin of DuPont (inventors and manufacturers of napalm) was not one which I found especially attractive.

Q: What is your process of songwriting?

A: Under normal conditions, I don't write a lot of songs. I've been fortunate enough over the years to have been surrounded by enough people who write better than I ever will. I tend to write when something needs to be said that nobody else has said or which hasn't been said quite the way I'd like it said.

I'll start with a small piece; sometimes it's a tune, sometimes it's a lyric. Next I'll try to come up with whichever one of those that I don't yet have. More often than not it, what I have is a chorus, a bridge, or, as often as not, a last verse. Then I build the rest of the song backwards or inside out to finish it.

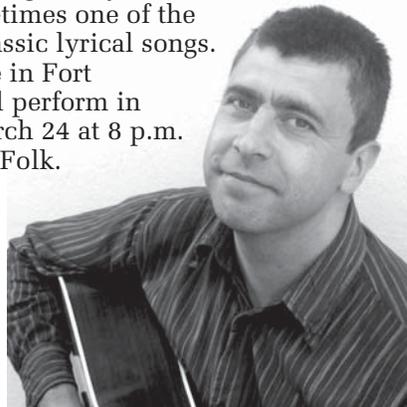
Pete Morton in first-time Madison concert

Sublime!" murmured a person near me when England's Pete Morton finished his first song at a concert in Viroqua last fall. The song captures people in an early movie: "They're walking so quickly down the high street of the past...the first day of summer in 1905...." Whether he's standing in line at the post office, writing as peasant poet John Clare, or as a desperate asylum seeker, Pete is observant and insightful about people and the world. His songs are by turns funny, poignant, and political.

Pete started his musical career as a busker on the streets of Europe and, alone on stage with his guitar, engages and holds an audience with the variety of his songs, the sincerity of his presence. Many of his songs have choruses and Pete invites people to sing along. Every concert includes at least one traditional song, sometimes one of the big ballads, sometimes one of England's classic lyrical songs.

Although he has sung at the Café Carpe in Fort Atkinson, in Milwaukee, and Viroqua, he'll perform in Madison for the first time on Saturday, March 24 at 8 p.m. at the Wil-Mar Center in a concert for Mad Folk.

Award-winning Minnesota singer Bill Isles will open for Pete. Advance tickets are available for \$14 at Borders Bookstores, B-Side Records, Orange Tree Imports, Spruce Tree Music, and Steep and Brew on Odana Road. Remaining tickets will be \$16 at the door on the evening of the concert.



Joe Jencks

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Mansfield,” about workers locked out of an Ohio steel mill for nearly four years, and “Rise as One,” inspired by the strike of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees Local 419.

Joe Jencks does not only talk the talk and sings the songs, but he walks the walk. He serves on the executive board of AFMLocal 1000, North American Traveling Musicians Union, and is a member of the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance.

Ron Olesko of WFDU-FM in Teaneck, NJ, has said of Joe, “His voice will instantly draw you into his passionate songs. Joe Jencks is a songwriter whose craft and artistry will remind you of the best efforts of Phil Ochs, Stan Rogers, and Woody Guthrie. The troubadour tradition is alive and well in the 21st century with the music of Joe Jencks.”

Bill Fischer of the *Victory Music Review* also noted the similarity to Phil Ochs’ performance style: “He has a remarkable tenor voice that’s capable of great strength and sweetness in the same moment, much as

was Phil Ochs’s voice. His guitar is always a dead-on accompaniment to his songs’ intentions.”

Tickets for the show are \$12 in advance, \$14 at the door. Advance

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tickets may be purchased now at Borders Bookshop East and West, B-side Records, Spruce Tree Music, Orange Tree Imports, and Steep and Brew on Odana Road. Non-perishable donations of food will be collected at the concert for the Wil-Mar food bank.

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