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# Mad Folk NEWS

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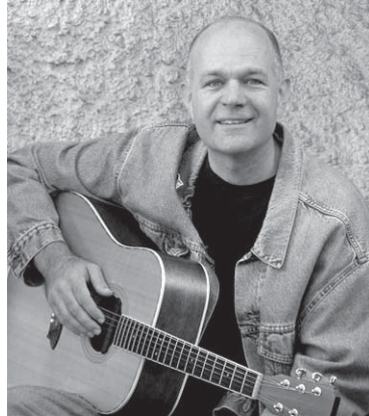
Newsletter of the Madison Folk Music Society

Volume 33, No. 5 / May 2007

## Folk on State returns for its fifth season!

Mad Folk will again be co-sponsoring Folk on State with the Greater State Street Business Association. As we go to press we are still working with the city and State Street Merchants on the exact location and time this summer. It will either be at Peace Park in the 400 block of State Street or to Concrete Park at the intersection of Francis Street and State Street. As soon as we have the confirmed site, we will post it on our web site and it will also be in the June newsletter.

We can use your help if you would be willing to volunteer for a Saturday or two. It is not too involved: setting up chairs, selling CDs, and passing out flyers. The best part sitting down to enjoy the music. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Megan Christiansen at [madknitter@earthlink.net](mailto:madknitter@earthlink.net), as she has again agreed to be our volunteer coordinator this year.



Peter Leidy

We'll give you a sneak peek of who will be opening the season on June 2.....We are pleased to bring in all Madison musicians for our first week. Peter Leidy will do the first set and Lou & Peter Berryman will do the second set. Our June newsletter and soon



Lou & Peter Berryman

our web site will have the whole lineup. But we can assure you we will have a great mix of both local and nationally touring musicians. Some will be old familiar faces that we all know and love, and as always we are excited to bring in and introduce a few new faces to our wonderful Madison audience.

### *Wisconsin debut for The Biddies*

Anyone familiar with Claudia Schmidt knows that she is a tour de force all on her own. Now add Jan Krist and Kitty Donohoe and you get what David Tamulevich calls "the three most talented women in Michigan Folk." All three have been individually wowing audiences for years. Now as a trio they have braided together their notable talents as songwriters, their stunning voices, and the wealth of their experiences.

The uninitiated are in for a wicked good time from the Sunday-go-to meetin'-testifying-vocals of Claudia Schmidt to the elegant Celtic lilt of Kitty Donohoe's voice and the literary lyrics of Jan Krist.

They will make their Wisconsin debut on Wednesday, May 9 at The Brink Lounge in Madison. Tickets are \$10 for more information go to: <http://www.thebrinklounge.com/music.shtml>.



### Sarah Longwing to perform at concerts, dance

Musicians Sarah Granskow and Sarah Nagell (whom some of you may remember from HFAA events at Folklore Village) have formed an exciting Norwegian singing and fiddling duo called Sarah Longwing that will be appearing in the Madison area in May.

Sarah Longwing's unique style brings the Norwegian experience to life with a North American perspective through traditional folktales and music as well as contemporary stories and lyrics. This musical storytelling is in a comprehensible mixture of languages (mainly English, Norwegian, and Swedish) and the instrumental music is played on traditional Norwegian folk instruments:

(continued on back page)

# Sarah Longwing

(continued from page 1)

the 8-stringed Hardanger fiddle, the Setesdalsfele (a cross between a

Hardanger fiddle and a violin, made by Sarah Granskou), the seljefløyte (willow flute), and the munnharpe

(Norwegian-made jaw harp).

Classroom workshops include Norwegian singing, dancing, basic language instruction, arts and crafts (troll statues), basic Norwegian history, musical improvisation, and acting/storytelling tutorials.

In keeping with the Sons of Norway Foundation's humanitarian efforts, Sarah Longwing's programs nurture respect for our elders, minorities, and the impoverished. They also highlight the role of music as an international language of peace and understanding.

On Saturday, May 5, there will be a concert and music jam session in Mt. Horeb at 7 p.m. at the Grumpy Troll Restaurant and Brewery, 105 South Second Street. Musicians are welcome to join in!

After several school residencies, there will be a concert and dance in Madison at 7 p.m. at the Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer Street (free-will donation/raffle). Bring your dance shoes and instruments!

For additional information about the tour, call 833-7066 or visit <http://singingfiddler.com/>.



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dbuhler@charter.net  
Norbert Wodke, secretary..... 836-8422  
nfwodke@chorus.net  
Dede Goldberg..... 246-4332  
Speedydd99@yahoo.com  
Bill Fiore..... 256-4687  
fior@charter.net  
Tracy Comer..... 276-8192  
tracy@tracycomer.com  
Ron Dennis..... 226-9472  
rondenpho@aol.com  
Meg Skinner..... 238-6950  
askinner@wisc.edu  
Vicky Jones..... 238-4661  
vickyjones@aol.com

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**Mad Folk e-mail:** Madfolk@charter.net

**Mad Folk web site:** [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org)

# Madison Folk Music Society

P.O. Box 665, Madison, WI 53701

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*Newsletter Published Monthly*

Membership Form: **Madison Folk Music Society**

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

Renewal     New Member

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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### Membership Categories

Student     \$10 \_\_\_\_\_  
Senior       \$8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Regular     \$12 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Contributing \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Life         \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

**Total     \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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- Concerts
- Festival
- Housing performers
- Publicity
- Membership
- Transportation

*Make checks payable to MFMS. Your contribution is tax-deductible and helps us defray the cost of event expenses. You may designate its use. Thank you.*

Time to renew? Don't want to cut up your newsletter? Just be sure your name is on your check and mail it to the address shown. Enclose a note if there are changes needed to your information. Or, you can print a form from the Mad Folk web site: [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org).

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# All Strung Up

by Greg Linder

**David Mallett**, *Midnight on the Water* (North Road 71705). According to one reviewer, veteran folkie David Mallett is to Maine what Garrison Keillor is to Minnesota—the embodiment of an entire state. If that's true, Mainers must be a whole lot more expressive and romantic than we've been led to believe. Mallett's world, in musical terms, seems to consist entirely of naturalistic imagery, life lessons learned, and boundless, wide-eyed romanticism. The latter is no mean achievement after 30 years of road bumps and broken strings. Mallett is an enchanted rememberer, particularly on this 17-track live retrospective, recorded during a couple of small-town summer concerts on the coast of (where else?) Maine. The CD includes material spanning his entire songwriting career, though not what is perhaps his best-known tune, a folk anthem you've probably heard called "Garden Song." During three decades, his songs have been covered by a host of better-known performers, among them Emmylou Harris, John Denver, Alison Krauss and, er, the Muppets. There is a salty authority to his voice vaguely reminiscent of Stan Rogers, and he is captured here in a sparse but ideal trio format, delivering guitar, vocals, and harmonica with Susan Ramsey Crippen on violin and viola and bassist Michael Hurd. The performances of Mallett favorites like "Fire," "Somewhere in Time" and "The Ballad of the St. Anne's Reel" are flawless, offering an immediacy that transcends earlier studio recordings. I note that there is virtually no stage patter during this live CD. So maybe to a degree Mallett is the taciturn stoic we expect a Mainer to be after all. But certainly not in his music.

**Jack Williams**, *Laughing in the Face of the Blues* (Wind River 4033). Williams is a well-seasoned Southern guitarist who for decades split his time between rock/R&B and the troubadour lifestyle. His range and expertise as a player distinguishes him from many other singer-songwriters who are essentially rhythm guitarists who've picked up a few embellishments along the way. Williams makes music that is just as interesting instrumentally as it is lyrically or melodically—which is saying a lot because he is a plenty-to-say kind of guy. This particular recording ex-

plores, in a loose-knit sort of way, aspects of Williams' spiritual journey, which has turned into a "happy quest" after much original bitterness and cynicism. Here, he happily stands the Biblical story of Isaac on its head not once but twice, in "A Sucker for Love" and "The Unseen Hand." "Daddy's Heaven" is a parody of the traditional tune "Bill Grogan's Goat": "My daddy died and went to hell/ But found a way to live so well/ That folks in heaven, dull and bored/ All bade farewell to their host, the Lord." The CD was recorded while Williams' father was dying, and the approach of death serves as an underlying theme here, as is implied in the title track. But there's plenty of comic and pastoral relief—a brief recapitulation of an Uncle Remus tale called—"The Laughing Place," a pastoral reverie about cotton fields, and a couple of brief but savory instrumental interludes. Overall, Williams' sixth release delivers more music and covers more territory than anyone has a right to expect from one CD.

**John Starling and Carolina Star**, *Slidin' Home* (Rebel 1820). A couple of this month's CDs are bluegrass of the relaxed and friendly variety, including this one. Three members of the cast—Starling, Mike Auldridge, and Tom Gray—are former members of the original Seldom Scene, which may give some of you a pretty good idea of what to expect here. Starling's vocals are more distinctive than those of many bluegrass lead singers—he sometimes reminds me of Tom Rush in a higher register. The highlights of *Slidin' Home* include a warm reinterpretation of the Jimmy Rodgers standard, "Waitin' for a Train." Because this version is not as mired in twang as some, it serves to remind us that the song is as timeless and universal as class discrimination and is not just the story of a few bums hitching rides on trains during the Depression. Also here is a rendition of "In My Hour of Darkness," co-written by Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons back in the mid-70s. Harris makes an all-too-brief cameo appearance, contributing expressive backup vocals to the chorus. The group's reinterpretation of Lowell George's "Willin'" wrings just about every possible ounce of beauty and wistfulness out of the song. While Starling and his harmonizers don't sound exactly like road-weary truckers, their treatment is a revelation of just how pretty this song can be when you handle it with care. The entire CD was deliberately recorded in a "sittin'

around and pickin'" environment with no headphones allowed and minimal overdubbing. The result is a release that's decidedly less slick than those by the likes of Nickel Creek but a whole lot friendlier. What they may lose in technological certitude they make up for in sheer comfort and musicality.

**Hand-Picked Bluegrass**, *Do What You Gotta Do* (Bluegrass Lake Recordings 01). Here's the other down-home bluegrass CD. This one has been around for more than a year, but the group hails from the Tomahawk area of northern Wisconsin and is not exactly a household name elsewhere, so this recording may have escaped your attention. What we have here is a trio with a couple of regular additional contributors, the nucleus being husband and wife team Joe and Susan Cronick plus standup bassist/harmonizer Robin Mileham. What I tell customers at my book and music store is that Alison Krauss would have no cause for shame if she released this CD, and I'll stand by that. By this I don't mean to say that Sue Cronick sounds at all like Alison—she doesn't. But she's a warm-spirited lead vocalist who imbues as much country as bluegrass into her performances, and the band members complement her ever so nicely. Standout tracks include a bluegrassification of "Bye Bye Love," the Everly Brothers' hit from the '50s; a song called "I Must Have Been Crazy," a classic country apology for misbehavior; and a poignant ballad written by the ubiquitous Allen Reynolds called "Ready for the Times to Get Better." The group's relaxed treatment of Gordon Lightfoot's "Go My Way" is also tasty, with an arrangement courtesy of the Front Porch String Band. Every track is solid, including a pair of Joe Cronick originals—the bluegrass-obligatory gospel number "Judgment Day" and "She Said I Do." The latter, presented by Joe to his wife on Valentine's Day 2005, laments the romance that can get lost once wedding vows are spoken: "She said I do/ Now she don't/ She said I will/ Now she won't." There's plenty of fine musicianship on *Do What You Gotta Do*, contributed by sidemen Chris Silver and Paul Kienitz, but what makes this release endearing is that there's no trace of speed for speed's sake. These are fine contemporary players entirely at home with one another and with no need to impress upon us how new-fangled they are, making them a band to watch for at bluegrass festivals. For info on obtaining the CD, contact [handpickedbluegrass@charter.net](mailto:handpickedbluegrass@charter.net).