
MadFolk NEWS

Newsletter of the Madison Folk Music Society

Volume 34, No. 9/ Sept 2008

Folk legend Tom Paxton returns to Madison on Sept 27 for first time in 8 years

MadFolk is proud to present legendary folk singer and songwriter Tom Paxton, in concert at the First United Methodist Church on September 27 at 8:00. This is a not-to-be-missed event, a chance to see and hear an amazing performer, whose career has spanned the 45 years since the folk revival of the 60's up to the present "New Folk" revival. He hasn't played in Madison for 8 years so be sure to come to the show and see him while you have a chance.

"Tom Paxton is, by himself, two of the folk scene's best writers. There is the Paxton who can turn out incredible funny songs instantly to fit the changing times. Then there is the other Paxton, the one who has crafted lyrics so simple, so perfect that they become part of the oral tradition within a year of being written." - The Boston Globe.

Tom Paxton was born in Chicago, but his family moved to Oklahoma, which he considers his home state, when he was 10. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma, where he became interested in folk music, learned to play guitar and started writing songs. A stint in the army reserves brought him to Fort Dix, NJ, which allowed him to begin going into New York City and performing at the amateur-night hootenannies in Greenwich Village clubs.

When he finished active duty in September 1960, he settled in New York and began making his name both as a singer in such clubs as the Gaslight and the Bitter End, and as a songwriter, publishing songs in the folk magazines BROADSIDE and SING OUT! He auditioned for a slot in the Chad Mitchell Trio, and though that didn't transpire, the Trio's 1962 recording of "Come Along Home (Tom's Song)" was the first of a legion of artists who have sung Paxton songs, which reads like a Who's Who of contemporary music: In 1963 Pete Seeger sang "Ramblin' Boy" at the Carnegie Hall concert which was to become REUNION AT CARNEGIE HALL, released by Vanguard Records. That year, Seeger also played a solo concert in the same venue and sang three Paxton songs "Ramblin' Boy," "A Little Brand New Baby," and the satirical "What Did You Learn in School Today?" This show also was recorded, and an LP drawn from it was released on Columbia Records in the fall of 1963 under the title WE SHALL OVERCOME, including "What Did You Learn in School Today?" (In 1989, a double CD of the show was released by Columbia/Legacy, WE SHALL OVERCOME: THE COMPLETE CARNEGIE HALL CONCERT, featuring all three Paxton songs.) Also in 1963 the next Chad Mitchell Trio album, BLOWIN' IN THE WIND, contained two Paxton compositions, "Willie Seton" and "The Marvelous Toy." "The Marvelous Toy" was released as a single, and it peaked at number 43 in January 1964.

"I Can't Help But Wonder Where I'm Bound" was released in 1964 simultaneously by the Chad Mitchell Trio under the title "I Can't Help But Wonder" and by the short-lived Au Go-Go Singers (featuring Stephen Stills and Richie Furay) also covered it. The following year, the Kingston Trio put it on their Stay Awhile LP (an album that also featured Paxton's rowdy drinking song "Bottle of Wine") under the title "Where I'm Bound," and after that the covers multiplied, with a wide variety of artists, including Dion and even Tiny Tim, taking their turns.

"The Last Thing on My Mind", a song of regret over the loss of a relationship ("I could have loved you better, didn't mean to be unkind/You know that was the last thing on my mind.") quickly became a standard. In 1965 alone, covers appeared on chart albums by the Mitchell Trio, Peter, Paul & Mary and Marianne Faithfull. (continued on page 2)



Paxton (continued) After that, country artists Charley Pride and Hank Locklin, recorded it, and the duo of Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton released it as a single that peaked at number seven in the country charts in early 1968. Neil Diamond put it on his 1971 MCA album *Stones*, and after Diamond left MCA in 1973, the label belatedly released it as a single that peaked at number 56 on the pop chart. The list of other artists who have recorded "The Last Thing on My Mind" includes Bill Anderson, Chet Atkins, Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, Glen Campbell, Judy Collins, Sandy Denny, José Feliciano, Flatt & Scruggs, Anne Murray, Willie Nelson, the Seekers, and Hank Snow.

The Fireballs cut a rocking cover of "Bottle of Wine" that peaked in the Top Ten in March 1968. Five years after that, Doc & Merle Watson's version made it into the country charts. "Whose Garden Was This." John Denver titled an RCA album after this tune, and also recorded his songs "The Ballad of Spiro Agnew," "Bet on the Blues," and "Jimmy Newman," among others, over the course of his career. In 1982 in the U.K., the Fureys revived Paxton's 20-year-old song "Every Time" under the title "I Will Love You" and reached the charts with it.

Like Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs, Paxton is a songwriter who has followed the political movements of the time and been inspired to compose topical and protest songs. In general, his tended to be more lighthearted than theirs--the musical satirist Tom Lehrer was at least as much of an influence on him as Woody Guthrie--though he can be just as witty and just as harshly critical.

Paxton refers to these topical songs as his "short shelf-life songs", and rather than putting them on recordings doomed to be dated within a couple of months, he offers them as free downloads on his website: go to <http://www.tompaxton.com/download.html> for a free listen to the musical expressions of his opinions about John Ashcroft and George W. Bush, the uproar about those subversive Tele-Tubbies, as well as his profound expression of grief for and gratitude to the firefighters of 9/11.

He continues to write and record and, as he enters his 70th year, is one of the most approachable folkies working today, often to be found mingling with fans after shows. He also freely shares his gifts as he generously mentors performer-newbies, offering practical advice in stagecraft as well as conducting songwriting workshops. More information as well as directions to the event can be found at www.MADFOLK.ORG. Tickets are \$17 in advance and \$20 at the door. They are available at Spruce Tree Music, Orange Tree Imports, and Border Books East & West. **Please remember to bring a no-perishable donation for the food pantry.**

Johnsmith Concert to Follow MadFolk Annual Meeting on October 25

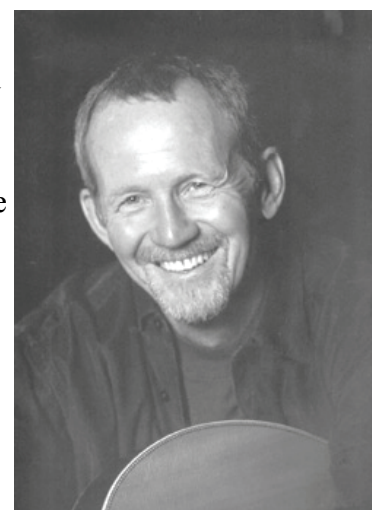
Midwestern singer-songwriter Johnsmith will perform Saturday night, October 25, at 8 p.m. at the Wil-Mar Center, 953 Jenifer Street, following the 7 p.m. Annual Meeting of the Madison Folk Music Society.

Members who attend the meeting at 7 will get to choose officers, and learn who has been selected to receive the Helen Schneyer Folk Music scholarship for the coming year. And by attending the meeting, members will get a free CD from the Madfolk archives, and reserve the best seats for the Johnsmith concert to follow.

Non-members who attend the concert only (for a mere \$10 at the door) will be treated to the heartfelt music of a self-described "blue-collar songwriter". Johnsmith was born in rural eastern Iowa into a large Irish Catholic family of ten kids. Since then he has had a short college stint in southern California, a couple of years working on an organic hippie farm in Iowa, and a few years in Colorado, but he now resides along the upper Mississippi in western Wisconsin. He periodically leads tours to Ireland, visiting castles and fishing villages by day, and sharing music with the locals in pubs by night.

Johnsmith is a past winner of the New Folk competition at the Kerrville Folk festival, and was recently featured on the "New Dimensions" program in NPR. His latest CD, "Break Me Open", portrays John's earthy brand of spirituality and finds him stretching his songwriting wings expressing the harder sides of life and love. He is accompanied by some fine acoustic musicians, including Native American chants and flute cameos by Bill Miller, and harmony vocals by Suzi Ragsdale, Sally Barris and his daughter, Elisi Smith-Waller.

Non-members who attend the concert only, will be given a complimentary membership until the end of the year, which includes a subscription to the MadFolk Newsletter, containing the coveted centerfold "refrigerator cover" with all the folk music happenings in the area.



MadFolk Stage brings more great music to Willy St Fair Sept 20-21

Madfolk will be making their debut appearance at the Willy Street Fair (WSF) sponsoring the Folk Stage. We're very excited that WSF is expanding to include a folk stage in their weekend of music events. Madfolk will be presenting both locally and national touring acts. The stage will be located in front of the Escape Java Joint.(916 Williamson St.) Performing at the Madfolk stage on Saturday Sept 20 will be Blake Thomas, Macyn Taylor and Bob Westfall and then Sunday, Sept 21 will bring Prince Myshkins, SONiA, Eric Schwartz and Scott & Michelle Dalziel.

Having a stage at WSF will be a terrific way to bridge our summer season which included the 6th (!) year of Folk on State and our regular concert season, which will begin the following weekend with folk legend Tom Paxton.

Blake Thomas, just released 'Flatlands', a cd that is getting rave reviews. Currently calling Madison home, once you hear him you will think we pulled up here from Austin. Blake first came to our attention after he & his band won first place at the Madison Area Music Awards a few years ago and we have been following him ever since. You can find him performing at a variety of venues in the Madison area, but can usually count on him every Tuesday night at Miceys.

Macyn Taylor will be the youngest performer on the stage, at the age of 14, but she has been busking on the streets of Madison since she was seven and is currently taking her music courses at UW - Milwaukee where she is also the youngest student in class. Macyn will have you singing to your favorites songs by Bob Dylan, John Prine and the Grateful Dead in no time. Perhaps she'll sing you one of her tongue in cheek parodies called "The Folky" sung to the tune of Simon & Garfunkels "The Boxer".

Bob Westfall, has been playing with this friends Mary Gaines & Chris Wagoner for many years. It is their tight sound together that keeps bringing folks back to their shows. You know they are having a good time on that stage and it just makes the listener have a good time too. We are pleased to be bringing them to the WSF this year.

Rick Burkhardt and **Andy Gricevich** make up the duo of the **Prince Myshkins**. The Myshkins are brilliant with their performance of political satire songs. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, they now call Madison home. And here is a little trivia for you: Real True Fact: Prince Myshkin is the main character of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel The Idiot. "Myshkin" means "little mouse," and his first name, Lev, means "lion." In the first chapter of the novel he tells a fellow rail passenger that "there are no Prince Myshkins left but me."

SONiA will be joining us from the East Coast. For many years she performed as part of the duo, Disappear Fear. However, for our stage she will be performing solo. Whether playing in bomb shelters in Israel, touring Europe, playing every major festival in Australia, bringing her songs of peace, she always makes room on her touring schedule for Madison. She is one of the most energetic performers on the folk circuit today and we are pleased that she has agreed to make a special trip here to help kick off our first stage at WSF.

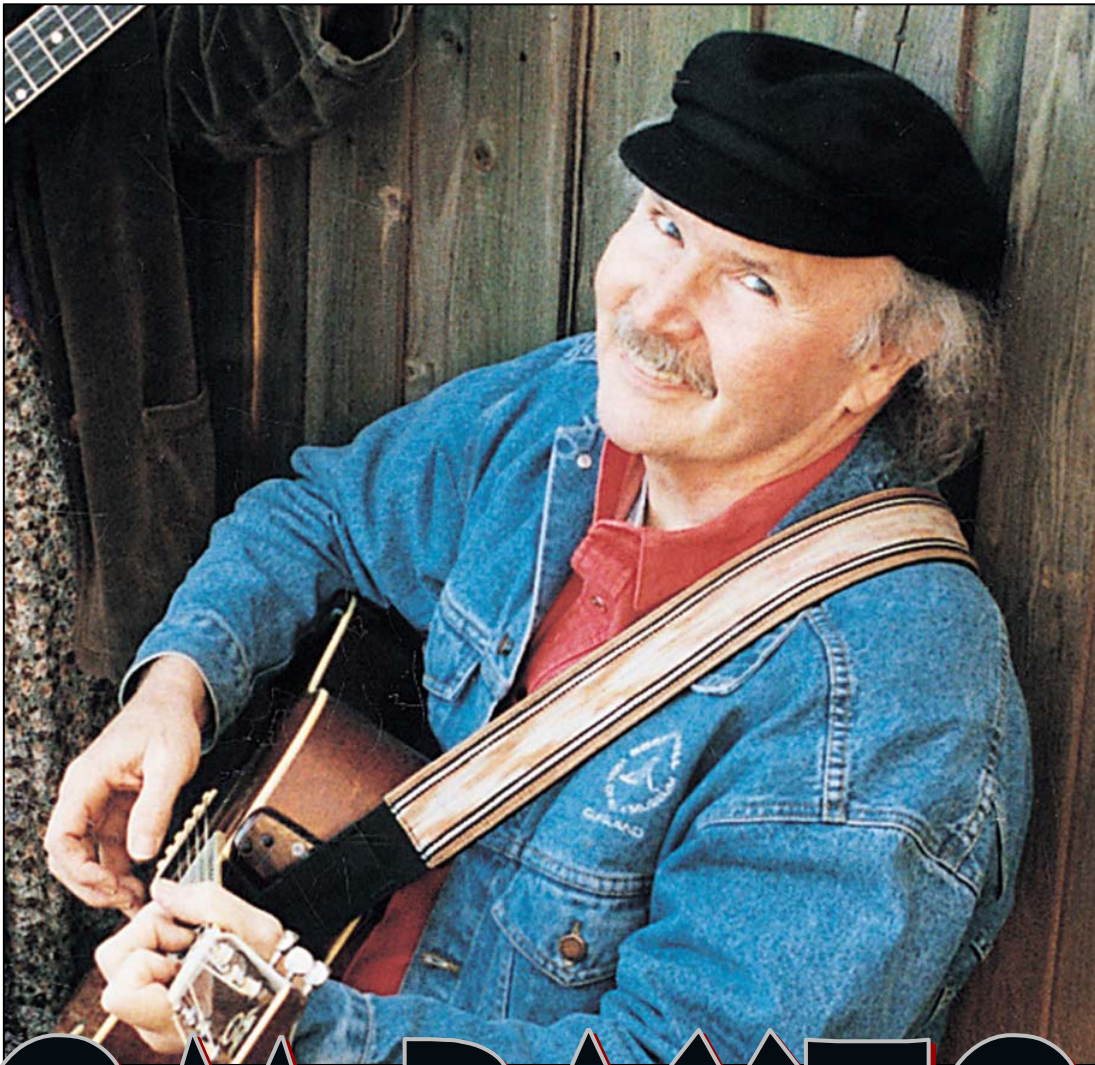
Eric Schwartz will be coming in from the West Coast. Eric plays all around the U.S. and is a regular both at the major Kerrville Festival and at the National Folk Alliance Conference and when he is on stage there is barely standing room. Eric is not your parents folk music. He is original and funny and continually pushes the envelope. Eric spent his high school years listening to Dr. Demento and Dr. Ruth and his music shows this. Eric is flying in special for the event. He was visiting Madison a few years ago and attended the WSF, and when asked if he would come join our stage, he said "How can I say no?"

And we wrap up the stage with the duo of Scott & Michelle Dalziel who will have you dancing in the streets! It has been quoted that they are: "Lively, Groovin', Enthusiastic, and Fun!" You'll be happy we have invited this talented songwriting team to grace our stage. They blend their voices so beautifully and naturally and are a joy to see in concert. So please come visit our stage during WSF; we have a great line-up, every performer a little different than the next.

Mad Folk Stage schedule for Willy St. Fair (in front of Escape Java Joint)

Saturday, September 20	Sunday Sept 21
3:00 p.m. Blake Thomas	12:15 Prince Myshkins
5:00 Macyn Taylor	2:00 SONiA
7:00 p.m. Bob Westfall with Mary Gaines and Chris Wagoner	3:30 Eric Schwartz
	5:00 Scott & Michelle Dalziel

“His songs are becoming part of America.” – Pete Seeger



TOM PAXTON

Saturday, Sept. 27, 2008

8:00 pm

First United Methodist Church

203 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison WI

Presented by the MADISON FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY

Programming support by WORT 89.9 FM

Tickets \$17 advance, \$20 day of show

Available at: Borders Bookshops East & West,
Spruce Tree Music, Orange Tree Imports

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

Appleseed Recordings 'Give US Your Poor' raises money to help fight homelessness

It has been a year since Appleseed Recordings released 'Give US Your Poor', a cd that is an example of the power of music to effect positive social change.

Two years in the making, the fund- and consciousness-raising 'Give US Your Poor' cd was created by Appleseed Recordings and the national Give US Your Poor organization at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School. It brings together established musicians, socially committed actors and currently or previously homeless musicians in a collection of mostly exclusive new recordings that address the ongoing crisis of homelessness in America. There are frequent collaborations between the stars, who donated their time and music, and their formerly or currently homeless brethren on songs that often reflect on existence without guaranteed lodging, food, and the simple necessities of human existence. Almost all of the profits raised by this release are being donated to organizations benefiting the homeless.

There is a broad spectrum of artists, genres and styles represented on Give US Your Poor that makes the CD a moving, engrossing, and enjoyable, as well as educational, experience. Among the high-profile performers are Pete Seeger and Bruce Springsteen who join together for a second time (they also share a track on Appleseed's new Sowing the Seeds label compilation) to perform the folk classic, "Hobo's Lullaby."

One of the musicians most deeply involved in the Give US Your Poor recording project is Natalie Merchant, who listened to many of the demos submitted for the CD and chose to collaborate with not one but six veterans of homelessness on Nichole Cooper's autobiographical song "There is No Good Reason." Actor Danny Glover recorded "My Name Is Not 'Those People'." The CD's final track, "Here and Now" by Mark Erelli, was chosen for inclusion from among 775 original compositions by musicians submitted around the world to the Sonicbids Independent Artist Homelessness Songwriting Contest. You will also hear music by and read about those whom society has tried to ignore, such as teenager Nichole Cooper and 11-year-old Kyla Middleton, formerly homeless military veterans Michael Sullivan and Weepin' Willie, and outspoken poet/advocate Julia K. Dinsmore, whose two contributions are read by Danny Glover.

Give US Your Poor's mission is to create a revolution in public awareness, dispel myths and inspire action towards ending epidemic homelessness in the United States. It works to affect change at the policy level, engage volunteerism and contributions at the individual and corporate levels through media and education, and to funnel support to partner homeless organizations. Give US Your Poor, established in 1999, is part of the University of Massachusetts Boston's McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies. Most of the profits from this CD, donated by Appleseed Recordings and Give US Your Poor, will go to the Give US Your Poor Campaign to End Homelessness, a not-for-profit organization. CDs are available to homeless organizations at cost for use as fundraising tools.

To read more about the work that Give US Your Poor does to help the homeless, go to www.giveusyourpoor.org.

To order a copy of the cd, go to Appleseedmusic.com.

Java Notes Concert Series Resumes on Saturday, Sept 6 With Krista Detor

Java Notes is getting ready for the fall line-up and we are very excited to be having Krista Detor performing on September 6th. Krista's music has been compared to Shawn Colvin and she has performed a lot recently with Carrie Newcomer. Opening for Krista is local singer Ritt Dietz.

With her highly acclaimed album, 'Mudshow', Krista Detor was established as a gifted player on the world stage. Now, with her follow-up album, 'Cover Their Eyes', together with partner and producer, David Weber, she's created a collection of brilliantly provocative and compelling songs that push the edges of genre while remaining close throughout to the lyrical thread that defines her work.

The proceeds from this show will benefit Luke House - Meal Program for Homeless in Madison.

SPECIAL OFFER-

To kick off this fall season we are offering \$5.00 off at the door OR through the mail with this email - Tickets with this offer will only be \$10.00, OR Purchase safely ONLINE with a credit card at www.javanotes.org for \$12 and ensure your spot.

Blake Thomas Flatlands

Instead of other performers, Blake Thomas lists these as influences on his myspace page: cars, Texas, booze, skin, words, cats, blankets and mud. These prosaic influences have resulted in songs with surprisingly profound imagery and lasting impact on 'Flatlands', his most recent cd. On the title track, he sings about moving between "the corn and the stars." What an incredibly lovely and succinct way to describe driving in the country on a summer night. Later in the same song, he sings about "between the soil and the branches" and notes that the "soil can live without the branches but it doesn't have much to show." On 'Love Don't Live On The Highway' he describes our planet with "the earth is only a woman and the highways are nothing but scars." 'Feeling Like The Moon' takes the concept of star-crossed lovers to another planetary level when he sings 'you got me feeling like the moon that is just pining for the sun.' He's a slightly less poetic but equally entertaining in "I Don't Want Your Heart, I Want Your Liver" which is a truly great drinking song, particularly if you're nursing a broken heart.

Some of the songs on the cd are done in true honky-tonk fashion but several are slower paced. Thomas has a voice that is well suited to a variety of styles, he can sound world weary, captivated, irreverent, heartsick, cocky and desperate just by slightly changing the tone of his voice. Thomas currently lives in Madison and another local talent, Josh Harty, plays guitar and helps out with vocals.

Thomas plays around town on a regular basis and will be performing at 3:00 p.m. on the MadFolk stage at the Willy St Fair, Sept 20 so be sure to stop by and check out his set. 'Flatlands' and his other cd's are available thru cdbaby.com. Go to www.myspace.com/soloblakethomas to learn more about him and find out about his other upcoming shows.

Tom Paxton Comedians & Angels

Tom Paxton has been part of the folk music scene since the '60's when he became a frequent visitor to clubs and coffeehouses in Greenwich Village. On www.tompaxton.com, he describes himself as being 'greedy for every note of every folk song I could hear.' He's had an absolutely astonishing career and it is virtually impossible to accurately describe the impact that he has had on folk music. Holly Near is quoted as saying "Every folk singer I know has either sung a Tom Paxton song, is singing a Tom Paxton song or will soon sing a Tom Paxton song. Now either all the folk singers are wrong, or Tom Paxton is one hell of a songwriter."

Paxton pays tribute to the sources of his greatest happiness on his most recent cd, 'Comedians and Angels.' There are several love songs to his wife Midge and they each celebrate a different aspect of their relationship. 'When We Were Good' celebrates the wonder of young love, 'The First Song is For You' reaffirms the special bond they created by sharing the rough times along with good, 'Bad Old Days' is a thank you for helping him find his way and 'Reason to Be' is a celebration of the joy they share now. He pays tribute to his daughters in 'Jennifer and Kate' and honors the saints 'secular and otherwise' that he has 'marched, prayed, argued and sung with for so many years' in 'How Beautiful Upon the Mountain.' In the title track, he reminisces about friends that have 'drained the parting glass and sailed out to sea.' He ends each verse with 'I miss my friends tonight'; a simple sentiment but one that resonates deeply with anyone who has had to say good bye to a cherished friend. Paxton will be performing at the First United Methodist Church on September 27. Please see the article on page 1 for more info. If you don't want to wait until his concert to hear 'Comedians and Angels', you can order it on-line thru www.appleseedmusic.com or on cdbaby.com and itunes.com.

 **2008 Music Festivals** 

August 31, Sep 1

Fox Valley Folk Music Festival

Geneva, IL

www.foxvalleyfolk.com

October 24-26

Stringalong Weekend

Olympia Resort, WI

www.uwm.edu/Dept/Folk



Handing it Over to Riley

I was looking at the website of the **Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures** (CSUMC) in general (csumc.wisc.edu/) and a section about a woman named Sidney Robertson Cowell in particular (csumc.wisc.edu/src/collector.htm), an ethnographer who *...spent most of her 30s traveling alone throughout the United States collecting music from lumberjack camps, dance halls, and chain gangs*. A good number of these recordings were made in northern Wisconsin in the late 30s. And many of the songs feature refrains.

What exactly is a refrain? I was going to write this whole episode about them until I got sidetracked, as you will see. The word refrain, in lyrics, usually refers to a passage at the end of a string of stanzas (verses) that repeats itself, as:

In Dublin's fair city

Where the girls are so pretty

I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone

As she pushed her wheel barrow

Through streets broad and narrow

Crying cockles & mussels alive, alive, Oh

She died of a fever

And no one could save her

& that was the end of sweet Molly Malone

Her ghost wheels her barrow

Through streets broad and narrow

Crying cockles & mussels alive, alive, Oh

A refrain differs from a chorus in that a chorus can usually stand alone, whereas a refrain is an actual part of the verse. Dylan uses a lot of refrains, as *the hour that the ship comes in, everybody must get stoned, the times they are a-changin*, and *like a rolling stone*. I've written lots of (not quite as successful) songs with refrains, but also I like listening to songs like this because every verse has a feeling of a homecoming. The whole situation feels almost like the way, at the end of every day, you might say the same old "Good night, sleep tight, and don't let the bed bugs bite." Or, like my little babysitting charge David used to say, "Jesus loves

me this I know, E-I-E-I-E-I-O." You could think of those as refrains for the stanza of a day.

Anyway, I read again the brief online biography of Sidney Robertson Cowell and how she tromped around recording songs from old Wisconsinites 70 years ago. I was interested in her collection because I knew, from the recordings of Art Thieme, that a lot of the old midwest logging songs and woodsy ballads contain refrains and/or choruses. So I perused these old works which are archived on the CSUMC website at digicoll.library.wisc.edu/WiscFolkSong/. And sure enough, in these scratchy old thumpy recordings are many examples I was looking for, some more peculiar and fascinating than others. One, sung by Robert Walker in 1937, turned out to be an 1892 music hall song written by Albert Hall and Felix McGlennon, as I found out elsewhere (the amazing **Internet Archive** at www.archive.org/). Here are a few verses of the song I Handed It Over To Riley. Incidentally, songs with refrains often use the refrain as the song's title too.

There never were two stauncher pals

Than I and my chum Johnny Riley;

We'd booze together or flirt with gals

And we valued each other highly;

Whenever there was any booze to be got,

Or somebody paid for the keg or the pot,

I would collar the measure and gulp the lot,

Then I handed it over to Riley.

One day while I was on a spree

along with my chum Johnny Riley,

One of those men they call a "D" (?)

Came in and surveyed us slyly.

Then he grabbed me gently by the ear,

And whispered, "Young man, I've a warrant here!"

Well, I took that warrant in the greatest fear,

Then I handed it over to Riley

One night I found a watch and chain

While out with my chum Johnny Riley,

And he for his share did soon complain,

And he did it so awfully wily,

But as by a lamp we chanced to pass,

I saw by the light of the flaring gas

That the watch was gold but the chain was

brass,

So the chain went over to Riley

...And so on. Not only do this song's verses have a refrain, but a version of it is used in the chorus, too:

For Riley and I were chums,

and we always shared

Black eyes or sugar plums,

the devil a hair we cared;

When there was anything nice about,

take my word

That when I had done,

I handed it on, to Riley.

There is a lot more to be said about refrains, but as I mentioned at the beginning, though I started to write about this subject, I found myself straying to marvel at the dated phrasing in this ("I would collar the measure and gulp the lot") and other of these lyrics. I was also goose-bumped by the coarse, eerie sound of those old recordings, while gazing at the old timey photograph of Sidney R. Cowell and grooving at THAT. Going back again and listening to more of these old folks of long ago singing yet older songs, I realized how much I enjoy the evocative oldness (the oldness-ness?) of old songs and old recordings of them.

And I'm not the only one who digs this aspect of certain arts, as can be seen by the popularity of digital movie making software that puts pretend scratches and specs on your flick to make it look like old film. Many digital cameras have a "sepia" setting so that your photo can look like a daguerreotype. And music recording software offers tricks to make you sound like you are recording on a coal fired dictaphone. Jeans come pre-oldified and beat up. They make vinyl siding now that looks like old logs.

So I guess in the end, this month's WZ is about how the search for a specific needle can pull you out into a general appreciation of the haystack. There's a swell folk festival in New York state with an ideal name: The Old Songs Festival. We wrote a song for it years ago, with this in the last verse:

Gordo writes a new song on the hood

He would write an old song if he could

That's the refrain I would choose for this month's stanza.

WZ #130



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Please check your mailing label and see if it's time to renew so you'll know about all the great music coming in 2009! THANK YOU!

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Madison Folk Music Society

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