

# Mad Folk News

## Special Summer Concert!

### Brother Sun and Joe Crookston coming to The Brink in August!

♪ We are getting a little taste of the Shawano Folk Music Festival right here in Madison! Brother Sun and Joe Crookston are stopping by to give us a special treat.

Brother Sun – “The moment Greg Greenway, Joe Jencks and Pat Wictor pooled their voices as Brother Sun in 2011, the folk world was enriched by their harmony, humanity, and humor. In the years since, their bond with each other and their fans has only deepened. If there’s any justice (something they care deeply about), their superb sophomore release, *Some Part of the Truth*, should bring the warmth of Brother Sun to a whole new world hungry for the healing power of their music.” -John Platt, WFUV - New York

Joe Crookston – “At every festival I hope to find the gift of one artist whose songwriting and performance stand out. Joe Crookston was that gift for me this year at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. Stunning performance, great songs, and not a word wasted! I LOVE That!” - David Francey- Songwriter Ontario

Brother Sun, the trio of Greg Greenway, Pat Wictor, and Joe Jencks, wowed us at the Phil Ochs tribute concert, and we have been wanting to bring them back for a show of their own. They will be bringing their friend Joe Crookston as a co-headliner to introduce him to Madison.

Greg Greenway, Pat Wictor, and Joe Jencks have made their mark as veteran touring singer-songwriters, but collectively as Brother Sun, they truly have become something

special. The trio’s harmonies, as much as their lyrics, tell what they are about: warm as a campfire, stirring as a gospel church, rousing as a call to arms. Fusing folk, Americana, blues, pop, jazz, rock, and a cappella singing, Brother Sun is an explosion of musical diversity and harmony, in the finest of male singing traditions.

Brother Sun’s debut CD announced to the world that these respected singer-songwriters had banded together to produce some of the most powerful male harmonies on the acoustic music scene. After two years of nationwide touring and performances marked by outstanding songwriting, ethereal harmonies, off-the-cuff humor, and standing ovations, they have released *Some Part of the Truth*: a CD that goes a large step further in revealing Brother Sun not only as singers, but as complete musicians.

Joe Crookston is an artist, writer, guitar picker, painter, claw hammer guitar player, eco-village member and believer in all things possible. You’ll be pulled in by the magic and musical world that he creates and you’ll end up in the moment, celebrating together with the rest of the audience. He’ll sing to you ~ You’ll sing with him...His music embraces the universal, connects us, is masterful and downright fun.

Come to a show. You’ll travel with him along mystical, historical, and humorous roads, and twist through personal stories along the way. Amber eyes, Oklahoma towns, rat-

lesnake tails, Grandmother Moons and silver crowns. At the end of the night, you’ll likely leave inspired, taking home a renewed sense of what’s possible. In Irish culture, there is a phrase called the “The Long Note” ~ “The Long Note” is that place of resonance and transcendence where the music, the voices, the instruments, and the community ALL come together and unite...There IS a “Long Note” and Joe is courting it and always reaching for it.

#### Mad Folk Concert Tickets

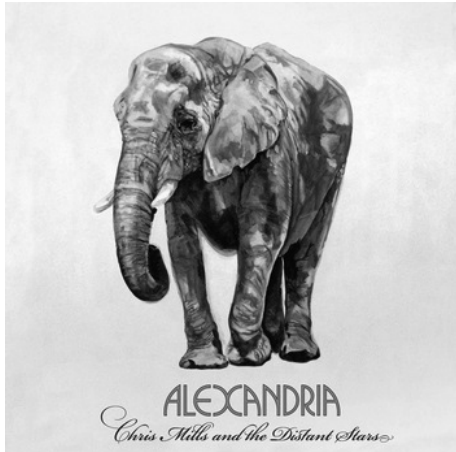
When you see this symbol – ♪ – you’ll know that you’re reading about a Mad Folk sponsored event. Advance tickets for Mad Folk shows are available online at [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org) and at these outlets:

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

Purchase tickets ONLINE for Mad Folk concerts via Brown Paper Tickets (with \$1.62 service charge):

<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.



Review by Kiki Schueler

Chris Mills just may be the best songwriter you've never heard of. He hasn't exactly been prolific, releasing only six full lengths, a couple of EPs and a "greatest hits" compilation in his nearly two-decade career. His touring is sporadic at best; sometimes several years go by without him getting any closer to Madison than his former hometown of Chicago. But he is worth seeking out. His 2002 release *The Silver Line* stands with *Dylan's Blood on the Tracks* as the only two records I would call perfect. And his live shows are surprisingly energetic and hilariously entertaining given that some of his songs are pretty dark. Over the years he has pulled back on the orchestration that characterized his earlier releases, and focused more on his singing. The results are no less intriguing. New release *Alexandria* highlights his voice like none of his previous work. It's the focal point of the record, the instrumentation from backing band the Distant Stars mixed well below.

The title track is the record's most urgent; pounding piano and propulsive drums push the song's vivid imagery past you in a rush of colorful metaphors. "Little bird, where have you gone? You used to sit at my window and sing to me all night long about the language you lost in the library fire, and your brave little sister

who died in the mines, and your blind baby brother swallowed up by the flood, your kingdom of trees and your valley of blood." Despite the occasionally tongue-twisting lyrics and the breakneck pace, every line is crystal clear. The track, like much of the record, benefits from liberal use of keyboards courtesy of Norwegian Christer Knutsen (who also coproduced with Mills). "Alexandria" features him on piano and organ (as well as backing vocals), while on the opposite end of the spectrum is the spare "The Sweet Hereafter" with just his forlorn piano backing Mills's heart-rending lyrics. "Sometimes I feel like I'm gonna spend my whole life standing on the wrong end of a cigarette," he claims before adding "the darkness in this place, it goes on for miles, I can't tell if it's day or night." In between these extremes is the organ-drenched "Blooms," which features another of his great opening lines—"there was a time not long ago I was a wraith, I was a shadow"—as well as a burst of screaming guitar that somehow doesn't sound at all out of place. The song voted most likely to get stuck in your head is slow-building "Castaways," which answers its repeated chorus of "Are you waiting to come ashore?" with another question, "What are you waiting for?"

Never fear, there is still plenty of jangly guitar here. The catchy "Helpless Bells" opens with an addictive acoustic strum and foot-stomp thump, then builds with backing vocals, electric guitar, snare, bass and finally what I can only describe as an alien synth. Meditative opening track "Wild Places" has it all—finger-picked guitar, subtly effective percussion, ethereal layered vocals, and a fortune-cookie-worthy message,

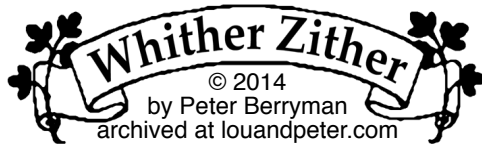
"hold on to the ones that love you, and to your heart always be true." Only final track "When We Were Young" brings back the strings, arranged by longtime collaborator David Nagler, in a nostalgic nod to earlier records. It's tempting to think about what the quartet could have added to the rest of the songs, but ultimately you realize they're kinda perfect just the way they are.

Chris Mills plays Kiki's House of Righteous Music on August 17.

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](mailto:madfolk@charter.net). Learn about concerts, membership, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities at [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org).

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## Ostensibly

This Whither Zither is a follow-up to last month's column which, I was thrilled to find, brought some interesting comments into my digital in-basket. The title of the column was "Does Truth Matter?" Aspects of this peculiar question were goofed with, such as whether perceived truth makes a joke funnier, a song more lovable, an adventure story more gripping. Most folks probably agree that we live in an age of questionable truth and even of acceptable untruth, what with Photoshop, digital pitch correction of off-key singers, non-sugar sweeteners, body doubles, plastic lumber, silk flowers, and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter.

Thinking about these things led me naturally to questions about whether truth plays any part in the worlds of art in general and in songwriting and song appreciation in particular. To use a new example, does it make the song Ragtime Cowboy Joe weaker to know that it was written in Brooklyn and not Out West somewhere? Does it make the song stronger to know there really was a "Joe" (Joe Abrahams), who was the nephew of one of the composers (Maurice Abrahams), and that Joe inspired the song by showing up at his uncle's place wearing a cowboy outfit? Does it make this factoid stronger or weaker to know I got my info about it from Wikipedia?

My friend, the great ultra-clever Bellingham songwriter Zeke Hoskin, emailed me this:

*"Once I worked off and on for two years on a ballad about an imaginary man who spent his retirement building a little submarine, rescued a child with a medical emergency on an island during a storm, and died at the end. I sang it to Jon Bartlett, who just asked, "Did that really happen?", and I came to realize that the whole project was a fex."*

"Fex," incidentally, is the Latin singular form of "feces." I had to look it up. Anyway, as I told Zeke, this reminded me that I am sliding down a similar slope regarding a song I as lyricist and Lou my composer partner wrote a few years ago

called "Mazomanian Moon." We wrote it because we had been invited to perform at a festival in Mazomanie, which is a lovely town a few miles from Madison. I have spent time there, and we had played in Mazomanie before, but I never lived there. The song is *ostensibly* being sung by someone who DID live there but moved away, and has missed the place ever since.

The song got a polite but lukewarm reception when we sang it, and to this day I believe it's because the folks in the audience knew darn well that we had never lived in Mazomanie, and that the whole thing was a fex. Of course, I discount the possibility it's a lousy song. Anyway, I'm busy adding a verse at the beginning, explaining how I MET someone from Mazomanie, who proceeded to tell me his homesick story. I think that may clear the air. On the other hand, it's another -- and in a way more devious -- lie, so who knows?

I first got tangled in these lines of reasoning when my old pal Stuart Stotts, Madison songwriter extraordinaire, and I, had one of our recurring coffee sessions a couple months ago. One of Stuart's most well known songs is a wonderful and internationally popular piece called Music In My Mother's House. You've probably heard it, and likely have sung it, at least to yourself. But even if not, you can imagine from the title what it's about.

Well, Stuart pointed out that the whole shebang was completely made up; there was no such music in his mother's house, at least to the extent portrayed in the song. Toward the end is this verse:

*Those days come back so clearly  
Although I'm far away  
She gave me the kind of gift  
I love to give away*

*And when my mother died,  
And she'd sung her last song  
We sat in the living room,  
Singing all night long*

I asked Stuart if I could use our conversation in my column, and here's what he wrote:

*"You can of course mention that, although, to be more complete, my mom did sometimes sing with us at the piano so there's a vague emotional sense of the truth of the song, but the details and*

*larger sense are completely stolen. or fabricated. Plus, my mom's still alive, which creates the great lie even more..."* When I look over my own pile of lyrics, I find quite a few first-person songs, some of which could be mistaken as pretending to be true representations of my life. I wrote about living in my car: not true. I wrote as though I were a mother of three: not true. I have a recent song referring to my dancing pantsless on the porch as my wife plays the banjo: not true, so far.

I doubt I have one single song that could be called absolutely true, though many of them are so odd they are in no danger of being misunderstood in that way. But concerning those that are teetering on the cusp, I agree with Stuart, who went on to summarize:

*...It's the story that rules, and, unless you are an absolute truthist, let's just acknowledge that everything is filtered.*

I think most audiences approach songs (and all the arts) in this way, delighted to have the truth admittedly and interestingly "filtered," though I do vaguely remember someone referring to writers of fiction as "professional liars." But to extrapolate further, you might even say that this "filtering" is the fundamental JOB of the artist: to creatively filter the truth.

This topic is endless. After I submitted last month's column, I Googled the phrase "Does truth matter" and got twelve million hits. There is everything from a Carl Sagan piece about science vs pseudoscience, to zillions of writings about the question as it pertains to politics, religion, dating, food, and so on. Had I Googled before writing, I might have skipped the topic as being over-discussed. Googling can be thwarting. And that's the truth.

My special deep thanks to my dear pals Stuart Stotts and Zeke Hoskin for allowing me to peek into the privacy of their creative processes, and to share bits of their secrets with readers of Whither Zither. Please do visit their web sites:

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Stuart Stotts:  
stuartstotts.com

Zeke Hoskin:  
zekehoskin.com

**Shawano preview: Magnificent singing, images, stories**



**Madison Folk Music  
Society PRESENTS**



# **Brother Sun & Joe Crookston**

**Thursday, August 7, 2014**

**7:00 pm**

**THE BRINK LOUNGE, 701 E. Washington, Suite 105**

Tickets \$15 advance, \$18 day of show

Available at: [www.madfolk.org](http://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

July 2014

## Mad Folk Events



### Summer Sing-Along w/ Mac Robertson & David Eagan

Friday, August 15  
Blue Mounds Main shelter, top of the hill -- 8pm  
Free! (State Park sticker req. for entry)

### Brothers Sun AND Joe Crookston

Thursday, August 7 -- 7pm  
The Brink Lounge -- \$15 adv, \$18 d.o.s.

## Venues



### The Brink Lounge

- Thursday, August 14, Aaron Williams and the HooDoo, 8pm, no cover
- Thursday, August 21, Aaron Williams and the HooDoo, 8pm, no cover

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

Mother Fool's  
Coffeeshouse  
1101 Williamson St.  
motherfools.com  
608-259-1030

### Mother Fool's

- Saturday, August 16th - Rusty Belle - 8pm \$6
- Sat, July 26, Nouveau-Expo, 8pm - \$6

### Folklore Village

- Thursday, August 5 - Open Mic
- Monday, August 9 - "Best of Summer" Healthy HoeDown with Sponsor Cates Family Farm
- Sunday, August 14 - Village Harmony Teen & Adult Singning Workshop
- Sunday, August 14 - Village Harmony Evening Concert in Plum Grove Church

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



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

### Cafe Carpe

All shows at 8:30pm unless indicated otherwise

- Saturday, August 2, Mark Dvorak, Bil Camplin, John Sieger - \$10 @ 8pm
- Friday, August 8, Elks Teeth and Rabbits Feet
- Saturday, August 9, Bill Stines - \$15
- Sunday, August 10, Strangled Darlings - 7pm
- Friday, August 15, Rusty Belle, Hayward Williams - \$10
- Sunday, August 17, Tony Furtado - 7pm
- Thursday, August 21, Pierce & Grace Pettis, David Hawkins - \$15 @ 8pm - No Reserve
- Friday, August 22, John Gorka - \$20 pay in adv
- Saturday, August 23, Piper Road - \$10
- Friday, August 29, Josh Hartv, Jonathan Statz

## Gigs

### Kiki's Righteous House of Music

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

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

- August 2 @ 9 pm (doors at 8) Shane Sweeney/Ryan Parker suggested donation \$8
- August 7 @ 8 pm (doors at 7) The Water Liars suggested donation \$10
- August 17 @ 8 pm (doors at 7) Chris Mills suggested donation \$20 tickets available at Undertow  
www.undertowtickets.com/product/chris-mills-madison-wi-august-17-8pm
- August 29 @ 8 pm (doors at 7) Rocky Votolato suggested donation \$20 tickets available at Undertow  
www.undertowtickets.com/product/rocky-votolato-madison-wi-august-29-8pm

### Dave & Anne Host Folk

Invitation & Advance RSVP required.

For full details or to request an invitation, contact Dave & Anne at annedave@chorus.net

- Saturday August 7:30pm (doors at 7) Hank Cramer suggested donation \$18 adults, \$15 kids under 18

### KG & The Ranger

Saturday August 9 - Oakwood Village Arts Center, 6209 Mineral Point Rd, Madison - Free concert @7pm

## Misc

### Old Time Jam

Monthly - 2nd Sunday of every month, 4 to 6pm

EVP West 3809 Mineral Point Road

Coodinator: Al Wilson

cell: 608-572-0634

afwilson@pediatrics.wisc.edu

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

Cajun jam held every first Sunday 3 p.m.-5 p.m. There will be no jam in July.

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

Call Karen at 608-238-6039 for more info. www.prairiebayoucajun.com

## On the Air



### Simply Folk on Wisconsin Public Radio w/ Stephanie Elkins, 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 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' Powers
- Fri -- Mud Acres (bluegrass and acoustic) w/Chris Powers

## Madison Dance

- African/African-American Dance classes with live drumming -- Sun, 7:00-9:00pm -- Metro Dance, 3009 University Ave. -- 255-3677 / 251-4311
- 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

# Thursday, August 14 Village Harmony Teen Camp On Tour!

## 4:30-6:00 **Singing Workshop:**

Open to teens and adults only.

Cost of workshop (**includes evening concert admission**) \$15 teens, \$30 adults

6:00 Potluck: Bring a dish to pass!

7:30 **Concert:** \$12.00 adult  
\$10 teens & seniors (65+)  
\$5.00 youth 5-12

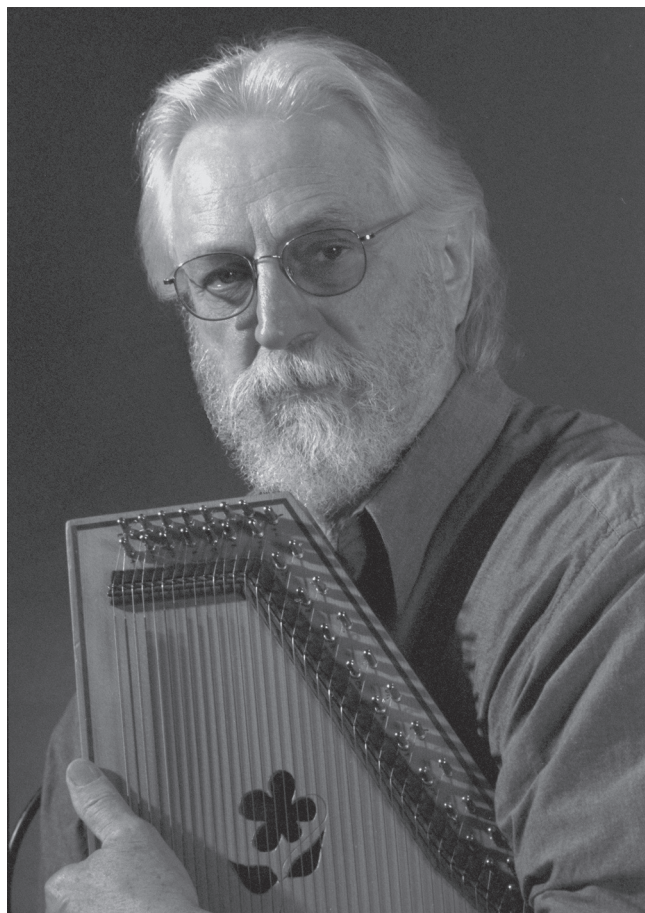


**With clear command of radically-varied singing styles and infectiously joyous stage presence, Village Harmony performances always knock people's socks off. Led by the talented team of: Mollie Stone, Emily Miller & Gideon Crevoshay**

# FOLKLORE VILLAGE *...passing it on*

[www.folklorevillage.org](http://www.folklorevillage.org) for more information  
45 minutes west of Madison

Reserve your tickets  
today by calling  
608-924-4000  
Check or Credit Card.



## Saturday, August 30th Bryan Bowers In Concert

### Master Autoharpist, Singer-Songwriter and Storyteller

**\$15 General Admission**

**"To call Bryan Bowers' performance simply a 'concert' would be inadequate if not inaccurate ... (it) could better be described as an experience!"  
-Deseret News**

# Is this your last copy of *Mad Folk News*?

There are two ways to renew your **tax-deductible** membership

## Way #1 – online

Visit [www.madfolk.org](http://www.madfolk.org) and click on “Join MFMS”

## Way #2 – unplugged

Complete, clip, and mail this form

Madison Folk Music Society  
P.O. Box 665, Madison, WI 53701  
Address Service Requested

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### Madison Folk Music Society

join  renew

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Choose membership category:

Senior	\$8	_____
Student	\$10	_____
Regular	\$12	_____
Family	\$15	_____
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