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## 'The greatest band' in Madison reunites at home after 32 years

**Ruthie Hauge and Ashley Rodriguez**

Jul 17, 2025

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The rock band Spooner, which includes members Duke Erikson and Butch Vig of Garbage, formed in Madison and celebrated their 50th anniversary with a show at Atwood Music Hall.

In 1985, Cap Times weekender rock columnist John Kovalic wrote, “For those of you who are new to Madison, let me just start by asserting — flatly and without qualification — that Spooner is the greatest band in town.”

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Members of the Madison-based band Spooner reunite for a 50th anniversary show at the new Atwood Music Hall.

RUTHIE HAUGE

**Billboard's**  
Survey For Week Ending 1/29/83

# Top Album Picks

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**Pop**

**BRYAN ADAMS**—Cuts Like A Knife, E&M SP-6-4919. Produced by Bryan Adams & Bob Clearmountain. Adams last set has shown dogged persistence at rock radio, and a growing dossier of impressive covers for his songs begs further attention for this crucial bid for wider acceptance. That makes the consistent snap of these rock stylings all the more fortunate: this is hook-laden romanticism, marked by crisp production and delivered in a rasping, AOR and pop adroitly, reminiscent of Tom Petty's work.

**RANDY NEWMAN**—23755. Produced by Phil Spector. Newman's return to the puckish New York rock-tinged music of his earlier years, as he ranges from barbs, as he ranges from monsters and just star vocal guests Ronstadt and my punchline makes this at

**EPs**

**SPooner**—Every Corner Dance, Mountain Railroad HR-8005. Produced by Gary Kiebe & Spooner. A tight, tough-minded quartet from Madison, Wisconsin, Spooner excels at uptempo melodic rock cut to '60s lines: no-frills guitars, reedy Farfisa organ and Merseybeat harmonies may already seem passe in the wake of techno-pop, but the band's winning verve and some strong originals tip the balance strongly in their favor. With some radio attention, this could prove a sleeper.

**Plain, PVC 6901**. Produces a very particular musicianship—well-stitched cuts are clean, w/dance club play. One highlight is "Indian Song," which shows promise for an urban

**Analot Records BIG 8**. Produced by person upstate New York band has very accessible songs that range from post psychedelia and pop reggi Fournier, this band has a haunting on musical ability, not gimmicks.

**MUSIC**

**LEON EVERETTE**, RCA 8600. Produced by Ronnie Dean and Leon Everett. In its move to bolster artists who haven't yet reached album-selling status, RCA here releases a 12-inch \$6.98 disk of six Everette albums. "Soul Searchin'" and "Rainbows Of My Mind" are key prospects and the Haggard-in-

**Billboard's Recommended LPs**

**pop**

**TODD RUNDGREN**—The Firm, Bearsville 7277. Run

**PLAYBOY**—february, 1983

**TRUST US**

There are many ways to promote records. You can rent limos for critics or give away T-shirts, buttons or dependable pharmaceuticals. The recordings on these lists got here the old-fashioned way: They earned it.

**HOT**

1. Collopie, Dances. A Renaissance Revel
2. David Lindley / Win This Record
3. Daryl Hall & John Oates / H.O.
4. Waylon and Willie / W.W. II
5. Spooner / Every Corner Dance

**NOT**

1. Judy Sheppard Missett / More Jazzercise
2. Neil Diamond / Hearlight
3. Ervin Litke / March—America—March
4. Heaven Bent
5. Here Comes Garfield (TV sound track)

**Black**

**ROBINSON**—Touch The Sky, Tams 60307L. Proby Robinson, Reginald Burke. Though not as social as Robinson's recent albums with Proby, this is creatively his best work in years, distinctly mellow whether on ballads such as "Dynamite" and the title track. The musicianship of such Smokey stalwarts as Marv Tarplin, Fred Smith and producer Burke (who doubles on keyboards) is perfectly simpatico. Commercial prospects will hinge on the success of the first single from the LP, "I've Made Love To You A Thousand Times."

**country**

**LOUISE MANDRELL**—Close Up, RCA MHL 18601. Produced by Eddie Kilroy. This album (one of RCA's new mini-LP series)

**MidCoast Artists Int'l. Limited**  
P.O. box 4321  
Madison, WI 53711  
(608) 256-4000

Spooner had recognition in national and local news publications such as Billboard, Rolling Stone, Playboy and the Chicago Sun-Times.

COURTESY OF SPOONER

The group, which also includes Dave Benton and Joel Tappero, played their first show together in 32 years — reuniting in the city whose music scene they once dominated — at Atwood Music Hall this past weekend. They were joined

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*Longtime friends and Spooner fans Peter Love, Stu Baker, Jerry Lynch and Joan Lynch embrace at the band's rehearsal at Community Organizations Promoting the Arts the day before the Spooner 50th anniversary show.*

RUTHIE HAUGE





*Longtime fans of Madison-based Spooner spontaneously begin dancing during rehearsals the day before the band's 50th anniversary show, which was Saturday at Atwood Music Hall.*

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*During Spooner rehearsals, Peter Love, a longtime friend of the band, shows off the all-access passes for its 50th anniversary show. The pass features a more than 30-year-old photo of him, covered in shaving cream. The photo was taken when band members and friends shaved the logos of the Chicago Bears and the Green Bay Packers onto his chest.*

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Erikson and Vig would go on to form other bands, including Garbage, who are currently on tour and stopping in Madison to perform on Oct. 3. Vig would also go on to open a recording studio on East Washington Avenue, Smart Studios, and to produce classic albums like Nirvana's "Nevermind" and the

Smashing Pumpkins’ “Siamese Dream.”

The band hadn’t played together since breaking up in 1993. Atwood Music Hall owner Toffer Christensen went to school with Erikson’s daughter, and Christensen asked if her dad would check out his then-in-construction new music hall, which opened in June.

“It was all blueprints and a mess when I got there,” said Erikson. Then Christensen asked, “Would Spooner like to play here?” The show is part of a Madison-themed lineup to celebrate the music hall’s opening.

The band held multiple practices at Community Organizations Promoting the Arts (COPA) in Madison the week of the show.

“It was a lot of work learning the songs again,” said Tappero, the band’s bassist. He said getting to play with his son, who is also a musician, was “the most beautiful part.”





*"50 YEARS!!!!" is written on the inside of an Ian's Pizza box in the green room backstage at Atwood Music Hall before Spooner's 50th anniversary show Saturday night.*

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*Band manager Bob Bartel re-joined to help Spooner with their reunion. "Spooner was and is a one-of-a-kind band," Bartel said. "They became popular playing their own music during a time when the Madison music scene was mostly cover bands. That is and was a rarity. From seeing Saturday's show, their music has withstood the test of time."*

RUTHIE HAUGE





*A front-row fan dances with raised arms as Joel Tappero and Duke Erikson perform with Spooner.*

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*Drummer and music producer Butch Vig joyfully keeps rhythm as photos of the band's past are displayed on a screen behind the stage. Vig told the Cap Times, "The last time Spooner played a full set was 32 years ago. As we started rehearsals it was daunting to get our musical muscle memory back, but I was surprised how it all came together so quickly."*

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*Joel Tappero and his son, Jeremy Tappero, who plays bass for Soul Asylum, play guitar side-by-side during the show. "I got to play with my son, who was born shortly after I joined in '78 and is a successful musician today, in large part because of this band," Joel Tappero said.*

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Erikson said he was "a little nervous in the beginning that no one would show up," but the show quickly sold out — Atwood Music Hall was filled Saturday with long-time Spooner fans, and close friends joined the band ahead of the

show as they practiced and decided on the setlist.

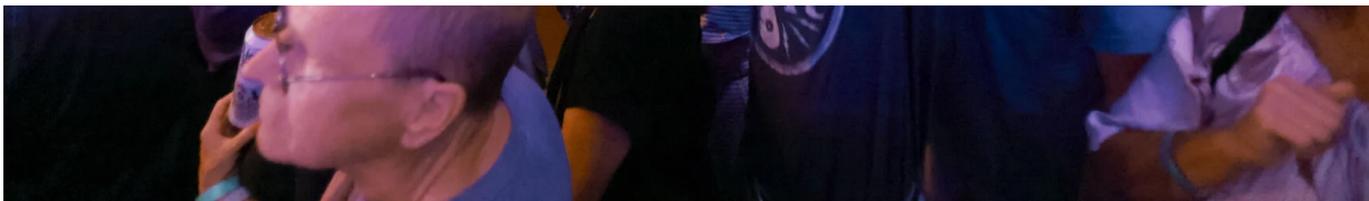
The show was not only a band reunion but also brought back people who had worked with the band over its five decades. “We had the light guy back, the old manager back. It was a whole family affair,” said Erikson.

“The music and lyrics of Spooner are timeless — they are full of hope and (are about) living your dreams and optimism,” said Michelle Parisi, a Spooner superfan who flew from Los Angeles to see the band.

She described being at the show like feeling “as if I was transported back to high school when you wanted to conquer the world — and their music let you believe you could do that.”

Fans like Stu Baker noted that they were thrilled to see stalwarts of past Spooner shows, such as Marco Pogo, a fan who jumps around in the crowd during sets. “I don’t think he ever missed a show,” Baker said.





*Marco Kunin, locally known as “Marco Pogo,” dances to Spooner's music in his routine bouncy way. Spooner manager Bob Bartel said, “He has been a fan since Day 1. He would come to our shows and dance (like a pogo stick) the whole show.”*

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*Dave Benton, Spooner guitarist, and other band members seemed to absorb some of the energy of the enthusiastic sold-out crowd, according to his fellow bandmates.*

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*Greg Ginter, owner of Madison Guitar Shop, fills the roll of guitar tech, sitting on the side of the Atwood Music Hall stage during the performance.*

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*Pauli Ryan plays percussion with Spooner during their 50th anniversary show at the new Atwood Music Hall.*

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Erikson said the group had “a good time revisiting all of these songs,” including band hits like “Cruel School” and “Mean Old World.” The band ended the set (before playing a short encore) on “Will You Remember Me,” which Erikson said made him emotional.

“I almost couldn’t sing it halfway through. The crowd gave us much more than we gave them that night,” Erikson said. He said he hasn’t sung that much in over 30 years.

Playing together after being apart for over three decades was daunting, but Erikson said the band found their connection quickly, capturing the magic that’s made Spooner an enduring Madison legend.

“It kicked in about four songs into the set where you don’t have to think about it, and it all comes together,” he said, “the connecting with each other.”

When asked to reflect on the experience, Vig said, “The gig at the Atwood Music Hall was a celebration, especially knowing that it’s possibly our last show. I have so much appreciation for Spooner’s legacy: the songs, the gigs, the crazy stories we have. It was an incredible night with my band of brothers, we could feel the love from all our fans.”





*Madison-based vocalist Kelly Maxwell contributes backup vocals for Spooner for the reunion show.*

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*The house was packed during Spooner's reunion show at the new Atwood Music Hall.*

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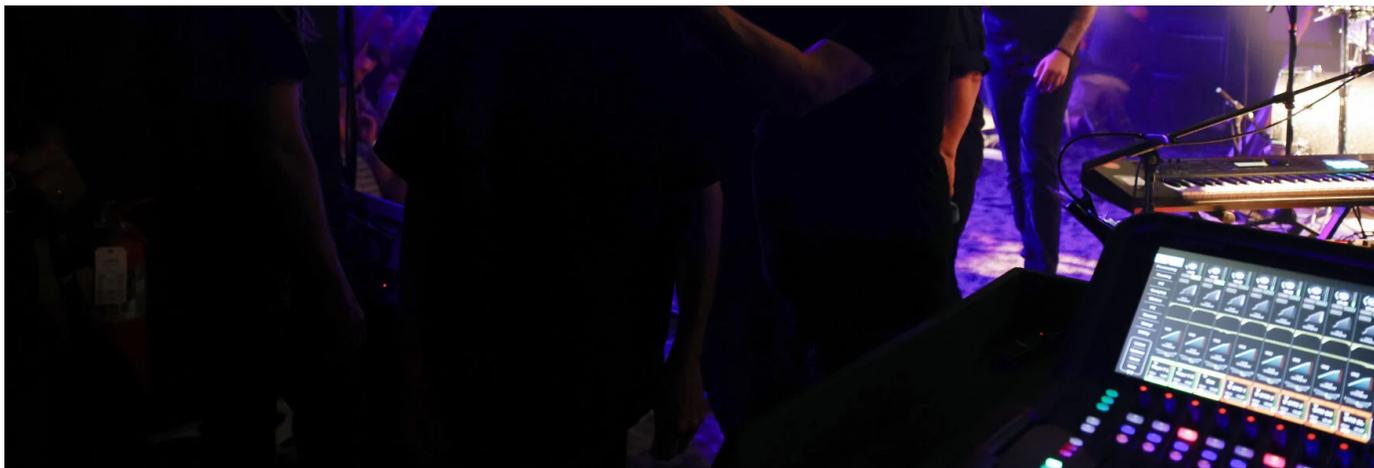


*Dave Benton, Duke Erikson, Joel Tappero and Kelly Maxwell perform.*

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*Butch Vig pats the shoulders of Spooner bandmate Dave Benton as they leave the stage after their set at Atwood Music Hall.*

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*Butch Vig, Kelly Maxwell, Pauli Ryan and Joel Tappero cheer and greet Duke Erikson, Dave Benton and Jeremy Tappero as they enter the green room after the show.*

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A Green Bay Packers T-shirt hangs in the backstage green room, near the setlist for Spooner's 50th anniversary show at the new Atwood Music Hall.

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Ruthie Hauge

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