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After Chance Meeting, Singer's Tribute Will Benefit an Animal Sanctuary

By FERNANDA SANTOS

It all began last fall with a chance encounter between a rocker and an animal-rights advocate in their hometown, Louisville, Ky. Jim James — singer, songwriter and guitarist of the band My Morning Jacket — was dining out with relatives when the activist Jenny Brown, whom he had never met, approached him with a proposition.

How about holding a concert to benefit the farm animal sanctuary that she ran in Woodstock, N.Y., Ms. Brown asked him.

Mr. James gave her his e-mail address, told her to keep in touch and went his way, but the proposal intrigued him. Several months later he came up with what he figured was a better way to help.

A few days after George Harrison's death in 2001 Mr. James locked himself in an old bathroom at a farm near Louisville and recorded six of Mr. Harrison's songs: an intimate, modest tribute of voice and acoustic guitar. The recordings had been shelved since then, and Mr. James said he wasn't sure they would ever be released, until he met Ms. Brown.

On Tuesday an EP with the six Harrison tracks hits stores, and part of the proceeds will go toward Ms. Brown's Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary, a refuge for 150 or so abused, abandoned or sick farm animals, including a three-legged goat named Albie, a blind chicken named Coco and a 700-pound pig named Judy, after Ms. Brown's mother.

To Mr. James there's a clear connection between much that Mr. Harrison believed in and the work Ms. Brown does at the sanctuary.

"George was one of those people that always seemed to be a good inspiration for other humans, seemed like he was a very socially conscious person, a very responsible person," Mr. James said. He didn't know Mr. Harrison, he added, but described himself as an admirer of his music and character.

"George was always trying to put the good message out there," Mr. James added. "And I think that's what Jenny has been doing at the farm."

Ms. Brown and her husband, Doug Abel, opened the sanctuary



SIMONE JOYNER/GETTY IMAGES

Jim James of My Morning Jacket. Some funds from his new EP will go to an animal sanctuary.

in 2004, leaving behind careers in film and television. (She was an associate producer of the ABC News special "Report from Ground Zero," and he was an editor of the Oscar-winning documentary "Fog of War.") Because they rely primarily on donations to keep the farm going, she said she couldn't miss the opportunity to recruit Mr. James's help.

While visiting her mother in Louisville she had bumped into him the day before at an outdoor

cafe, and though she immediately recognized him, she left without saying a word.

That their paths would cross again the following night "must have been some kind of sign," Ms. Brown said.

"Jim was leaving the restaurant and I could feel myself, like, 'O.K., Jenny, you've got to do it,'" she recalled. "I told him I was sorry to bother him and that it was unusual how we sat next to each other two days in a row, and

here's what I do and, boy, wouldn't it be a dream come true if he could lend his support to our mission."

As it turned out, Mr. James and Ms. Brown found that they had more than just their hometown in common. She's a vegan, and he's a vegetarian, as Mr. Harrison was. And they both say they feel they are no better than, for example, a pig or a rooster — a belief that Mr. Harrison also shared, his widow, Olivia Harrison, said.

"He was the kind of guy who always put the bug outside," Ms. Harrison said in a telephone interview from England. "He never stomped on an ant or a spider."

That a tribute to him will help support a home for abused farm animals is "an appropriate cause," she continued.

The EP, which Mr. James is releasing under the moniker Yim Yames ("I just wanted to make my existing name funny sounding," he said), was recorded at the Gallrein Farms in Shelbyville, in a plumbingless bathroom that is part of the same studio where My Morning Jacket recorded its first albums.

It includes four songs from Mr. Harrison's critically acclaimed "All Things Must Pass," which he released after the breakup of the Beatles, and two of the songs he wrote for the band, "Long, Long, Long" and "Love You To." (Mr. James's songs are also available for download purchase at yimyames.com.)

The Harrison recording is Mr. James's first solo venture, but not his first charitable foray. He has donated time to the musicians' outreach project Sweet Home New Orleans, helped raise money for the Center for Women and Families in Louisville and, in April, performed at Radio City Music Hall on a bill that included Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, among others, to benefit transcendental meditation, which Mr. Harrison helped popularize.

"I'm just lucky that I'm making a living with my music," Mr. James said. "And if I can help."



JOYCE DOPKEEN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jenny Brown and Albie at the sanctuary in Woodstock, N.Y.