

# Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

There is a line in an old John Hartford song that goes something like, "my, oh my, how the time does go." Well, it's already August and, like you, I'm sitting here wondering where this summer has flown. Summer is typically somewhat uneventful. Festival season for the most part is in hibernation, waiting for the first golden leaves of autumn, and promoters are waiting for folks to get back from summer vacation. That said, one exception lies just over two hours away and it offers a window into the eclectic music world. Although I wrote about **FloydFest** last year, I must say this grassroots event just gets better every year and I am amazed at the gardens, ponds, and walkways that are added to the site by the citizens of Floyd County every year. For lovers of the traditions of Virginia's Crooked Road and traditional music in general, there's nothing like the Virginia Folklife Porch, masterfully hosted by Virginia State folklorist, John Lohman. Here I caught intimate workshops by artists such as the Reverend Frank Newsome (timeless gospel from the coal fields), Elizabeth LaPrelle, the **Crooked Road All-stars**, as well as more progressive pickers such as **Crooked Still**, **Cadillac Sky**, Tony Trischka, and David Grisman. Other highlights were the odd **Indigenous Gourd Orchestra** (you guessed it!), **Railroad Earth**, the **David Grisman Quintet** with guitarist Frank Vignola, Zimbabwe's Oliver Mtukudzi, and an especially nice set by the **Avett Brothers**. Although the music was great, FloydFest is mostly about sharing community in a society more and more re-

moved from the concept – I'll be back next year!

Another summertime festival coming around again is the Ola Belle Reed Homecoming in Lansing, North Carolina, August 15-17 ([www.olabellefest.com](http://www.olabellefest.com)). Headliners this year include Si Kahn, **The Whitetop Mountain Band**, Jeff Little, the **Ola Belle Reed Family**, and many more. If you think you would enjoy a festival with fewer people, a sense of history, and quality music, this might be worth the manageable drive up to Lansing.

I guess the big news locally is the fact that Concord's **Avett Brothers** have been signed to a multi-record deal with Rick Rubin's American Records label. Not only is Rick best known for resurrecting Johnny Cash's career with the American Recordings disc, but it also seems that everything this man touches in the studio turns to gold. Both their manager, Dolph Ramseur, and **The Avetts** have worked hard for this, so a big Cuz's "hats off" to everyone involved! There is something to be said for believing in yourself, having a dream, and following it.

Also in the news is the anticipated CFS move to the Great Aunt Stella Center for our monthly Gatherings. There are a number of good articles detailing both the venue and Gathering performers, so I won't elaborate here. I must say, however, that I cut my teeth on roots music in this old church and the sheer thought of this music ringing again from the rafters of this beautiful building sends chills up and down my spine. As you walk down the stairs after the Gathering, may I recommend that

you check out the photographs on the wall of all the legendary artists that have graced this former sanctuary? There are more to come this Gathering season, folks, including a special concert by eclectic Canadian fiddler April Verch on November 21.

A host of marvelous CDs have come my way over the last month and I would like to share them with you folks. First, in the odd-pairing category, I strongly recommend the new one from Willie Nelson and Wynton Marsalis called, appropriately, **Two Men with the Blues**. ([www.willienelson.com](http://www.willienelson.com)) This disc was recorded as part of Wynton's Jazz at Lincoln Center series and features Willie classics such as **Bright Lights**, **Big City** and **Stardust** as well as jazz standards such as **Basin Street Blues**. I've always considered Willie to be as much a jazz musician as a country artist and I think you will agree that this proves it – a lovely album to listen to on a rainy morning! (What's that?)

Back in the late '70s David Bromberg turned me on to the scope and diversity of American roots music. His early records were like one-stop shopping for young Cuz as they had it all: Celtic, Delta blues, old-time fiddle tunes, and bluegrass, with a bit of funk and soul thrown in for good measure. Until recently, he had dropped out of the performance scene, studied violin making, and ultimately opened a high-end violin shop in Wilmington, Delaware in 2002 that he still runs today. Thanks to the reception of his new GRAMMY-nominated disc, **Try Me One More Time**, he's now stepped up his touring a bit. Anyway, those glory days of the **David Bromberg Quartet** are captured in the soon-to-be released **Live in New York City 1982**. This one captures a blazing set of eclectic acoustic music by a musical great at his peak – highly recommended!

