

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Welcome once again to another edition of Cuz's Corner. All in all, the summer of 2009 has been fairly painless, with tolerable temps and above average rainfall. Specifically, the weekend of the 24th, which featured both the Phlegar Farm Old-Time Jam Weekend and FloydFest, right down the road, was one to be remembered, with the exception of a couple of thunderstorms. Although I opted for FloydFest, I have heard over and over that the weekend at the "Farm" was perhaps the best ever – many thanks to the Phlegars from CFS for opening their land up to all the pickers and music lovers year after year!

It's hard to believe that it's been eight years since the remnants of a hurricane almost doomed FloydFest, along with the dreams of the Floyd natives organizing their debut festival. As a community, these true believers not only made that windy, rain-soaked festival happen, but they have since created one of the best-run festivals in the country. This festival has an eco-consciousness second to none. Not only were cans, bottles, etc. recycled, but much of the food and drinks were served in compostable plates and cups! As unbelievable as it sounds, all waste receptacles were manned by FloydFest volunteers advising "festivarians" as to where to put their waste. In addition to all the fine music, I especially enjoyed some of the "Rock the Earth" sustainability panels, which featured topics like "We Are What We Eat" on sustainable agriculture and "Social Change through Music". Festivals leave enormous carbon footprints; hopefully this festival will become a model in the future! Oh, by the way, the music was

great, too. Highlights this year were spirited sets by **Grace Potter and the Nocturnals**, **The Duhks**, **Ollabelle**, **The Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band**, a rain-soaked **Donna the Buffalo** set, and the many intimate workshops and mini-concerts on the workshop stage, which was creatively hosted by Jon Lohman, Director of the Virginia Folklife Program. I really appreciate the fact that music of Virginia's **Crooked Road** is featured throughout much of the festival, including standouts such as the **Whitetop Mountain Band** and many others. When I get overwhelmed by the bigger stages and bigger sound, the Workshop Stage provides a lovely retreat. Appropriately, FloydFest has become an official stop on the Crooked Road, in tribute to its support of the music and heritage of this unique area. I know this is an editorial comment, but it's quite obvious that Virginia does an exponentially better job in promoting and nurturing their musical heritage than does North Carolina, even though our contribution to traditional music is every bit as impressive – what's up with that?

Speaking of the **Whitetop Mountain Band**, I would highly recommend their brand new **Loafer's Dream** CD. This predominantly family band plays a style that fuses old-time and early bluegrass together in a style heard in the Grayson County area of Virginia. The band will be hosting the 3rd

Albert Hash Memorial Festival at the Mount Rogers School in Whiteside, Virginia on September 5th. It features stellar traditional bands from this region – a nice alternative to the larger festivals. Information about the band and the festival can be found at www.whitetopmountainband.tripod.com.

I have always felt that the best comedians used their humor to make profound social commentary. Lenny Bruce, Robin Williams, and George Carlin come to mind. Much the same can be said of the

music of Todd Snider, whose new **Excitement Plan** disc is one of his strongest to date. This is an acoustic disc featuring some of the wittiest songs you would ever want to hear and was produced by Don Was. (www.toddsnider.net)



"Cuz" and Little Bit

It's been a while, but songwriting

master Guy Clark is back with a satisfying CD of ten originals and one Townes Van Zandt tune. His new **Sometimes the Song Writes You** project features a batch of songs as good as he has ever written and a backup band composed of Verlon Thompson, Shawn Camp, Kenny Malone, and Bryne Davies. Guy's songs reach a place deep inside the listener. He is a true living legend! (www.guyclark.com)

Since his days with the O'Kanes, **Kieran Kane** has combined poetic songwriting and irresistible groove. After several incredible outings with Fats Kaplin and Kevin Welch, Kieran is on his own with his new delightful **Somewhere**

Beyond the Roses. This disc is a keeper and can be found at www.compassrecords.com.

For those of you who were there, how about that **Sam Bush** show at the Neighborhood Theatre? This was one of the best shows I've seen in a while. It's simply amazing the energy Sam still puts into his shows after his long, stellar career – perhaps he's the solution to the energy crisis!

Do make plans to attend the first CFS Gathering of the new season on August 14th, featuring the **Snyder Family Band**. This is a "no miss" show and showcases some of the hottest young pickers in the country – see you there!

You'll have to check your TV listings, but WTVI will be broadcasting a couple of concerts you will surely want to watch. **Pete Seeger's 90th Birthday Concert** and **Levon Helm's Ramble at the Ryman** are both public television at its best and neither should be missed! Have a wonderful last few weeks of summer and do get out and catch a live show!

Cuz

