

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Welcome to the Christmas edition of Cuz's Corner. The way these holiday seasons keep rolling by reminds me of a thirty-year-old **Richard Thompson** song called **Who Knows Where the Time Goes**. By the way, you will be able to catch the legendary **Richard Thompson** on January 9th at McGlohon Theatre when he brings his **1000 Years of Popular Music** tour to Charlotte. Believe me, Richard's idea of popular song and that of the general populace are two different things! (www.maxxmusic.com)

Speaking of the holiday season, I don't think there is anything that makes for a better stocking stuffer than a CD. Just think, it fits perfectly and keeps on giving after everyone has gone back home! My pick for this holiday season is one I reviewed last month based on a sampler disc I received. I'm referring to the new boxed set by **Emmylou Harris** called **Songbird**. Having listened to all four discs, I can tell you it's even better than I imagined as there is absolutely nothing approaching mediocre in this set and the historical liner notes and photos are worth the price alone. As a bonus, there is a DVD capturing about a dozen vintage performances through the years and a clip of her talking about the new passion in her life – animal rescue.

If your fanatical **J. J. Cale** friends are in a state of perpetual withdrawal due to the rarity of his tours and recordings, here is the gift for them. His latest release called **Rewind** is an interesting mix of never-released tunes re-

corded through the years. Although this may not be his best work, this will definitely satisfy your serious "Calehead" friends!

Yet another idea for the old stocking may take a bit of stretching, but I think if you work a bit, a DVD just might fit! In the last few years, New West Records has been releasing vintage performances of **Austin City Limits** shows.

These are not the half-hour shows you see on PBS, but the entire concert. A few of the shows that I've seen and would recommend are **The Flatlanders**, **Richard Thompson**, **Guy Clark**, **Merle Haggard**, **Lucinda Williams** and **John Hiatt**. (www.newwestrecords.com)

I must say the annual **AMA** festival in Nashville more than lived up to my expectations. By the way, the "M" stands for "music," not "medical," although my fifty-something carcass felt like it needed some medical attention after days of 2 and 3 AM bedtimes! My four days got off to an emotional start as the Tennessee Museum in conjunction with the AMA presented a heartfelt tribute to **Porter Wagoner**, who passed just days before the conference. Passionate performances were given by **Jim Lauderdale**, **Mike Farris**, and **Rodney Crowell**. When **Rodney Crowell** sang **Love Is All I Need**, written after the death of his parents, there were no dry eyes in the house, folks. The high point was a surprise appearance by **Emmylou Harris**, who sang a half-dozen songs with **Buddy Miller**. I must say I'm proud of a music as-

sociation that honors the heroes of real country music!

The awards show at the Ryman was the best ever and was produced by **Claire Armbruster**, whom many of you know from the tremendous lineups she booked during her tenure with MerleFest. As with MerleFest, she has a sixth sense for the artists that need to be on the stage together to make the magic happen. And the awards went to: **Patty Griffin**, album of the year and artist of the year; **Buddy Miller**, instrumentalist of



Cuz and Little Bit

the year; **Darrell Scott**, song of the year (**Hank William's Ghost**); **Lyle Lovett**, trail-blazer award; **Joe Ely**, lifetime achievement for performance; **Mavis Staples**, freedom of speech; **Avett Brothers**, emerging artist and best duo;

Ry Cooder – lifetime instrumentalist; **Willie Nelson**, lifetime achievement for songwriting; **Townes Van Zandt**, president's award; **Mary Martin** and **Jim Dickerson** won for lifetime executive and producer, respectively.

The teaming of the AMA with the Country Music Hall of Fame and The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame resulted in two tremendous keynote interviews with the great **Lyle Lovett** and **Emmylou Harris**. Emmy was ready to talk in her interview and I must admit I was spellbound during her nearly hour-and-a-half talk, which really got into the history and legacy she shared with the legendary **Gram Parsons**. It occurred to me during both of these sessions that these artists go beyond just being great

musicians; they are simply outstanding and special human beings that would have excelled in any field or endeavor.

Oh, did I mention that there were four nights of stellar showcase performances featuring the “best of the best” roots music artists? Listing my favorites would literally take me into the January edition of Cuz’s Corner – I’m serious. I suppose my favorite sets would have to be **Uncle Earl** and **Buddy Miller** back to back at the Mercy Lounge and simply listening to acoustic music at the epicenter of bluegrass and old-time music, **The Station Inn**. My musical discovery, however, was the wizardry of instrumentalist and producer Gurf Morlix. I was familiar with his work producing such masterpieces as **Lucinda Williams’ Car Wheels on a Gravel Road** and others, but had no idea of what he could do for a live performance. There are musicians that can make everybody on stage sound better – Gurf is one of them. Appropriately, my last set was **Ray Wylie Hubbard’s** closing set at the Cannery, which featured, in addition to his own players, Gurf Morlix and Buddy Miller on electric guitars – we’re talking the proverbial wall of sound, folks!

This festival is highly recommended for both members of the AMA and non-members. I guess the coolest thing for me in attending every year is realizing that there are actually others all over the country that enjoy this type of music and the sense of family I derive from the friendships forged over the four days. Think of it as an adult camp for music nuts! By the way, the annual Folk Alliance is coming up in Memphis, February 20-24, which is another fun, educational destination!

Since we seem to be spending most of Cuz’s Corner in Nashville anyway, I need to tell you that Amy

Kurland, who opened the Bluebird Café in 1982, is transferring this national landmark to the Nashville Songwriter’s Association International (NSAI). The announcement was made November 8th at a performance by founding member Kris Kristofferson and will be effective January 1st. I think this is good news for all the folks that have loved this place throughout the many years.

Well, I’m into a second page, which means I’m out of time and room. Please have the happiest and safest Christmas ever and we’ll see you next year! Pray for world leaders to listen to more roots music – the planet would be a safer place!

Cuz

To share your thoughts about your favorite music with Cuz (especially old-time), contact him either at dcmfrost@mindspring.com or 704-532-8846.

Always Wanted To Play An Instrument?

By Jennifer Stanton

Don’t wait for a New Year’s Resolution. The Folk Society has a collection of instruments any member can borrow. For a deposit of \$25 you can get your hands, paws, or lips on our booty for three months and see if playing one of these instruments is your joy. If you like the instrument so much you want to hold on to it for another three months (that’s **half a year**), make a donation of \$25 and consider it yours for another ninety days. We’ll put your money towards new strings and our number one lend-

ing collection wish list item – a **fiddle!**

By the way, if you have a fiddle or any instrument in reasonable condition that you aren’t playing any more, or if Santa ends up stopping at the Fiddle Shoppe before coming down the chimney for your family this year, please consider donating an instrument to us. We’ll take lovin’ good care of it **and** give you a tax deductible receipt. Contact Jen Stanton at 704-847-9328 or jennifer@jenniferstanton.com for more info and to reserve your instrument today!



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