

Cuz's Corner

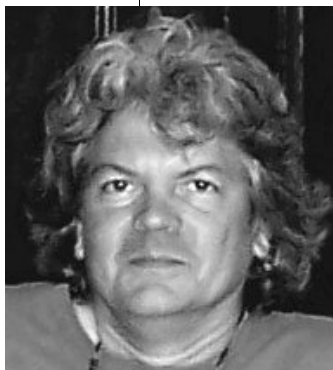
By Dennis Frost

It's unbelievable but, as I write this, we are bearing down on 2007! Last year was another stellar year for roots music in Charlotte and surrounding areas and there is no reason to think next year will be any less amazing. I suppose my highlight of the year occurred back in late April at Merlefest 2006 with a set I caught on the Hillside Stage hosted by Bay area musicians **The Waybacks**. By the middle of the set they were joined on stage by Bob Weir, Sam Bush, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings and the proceedings had reached an energy level between the musicians and the crowd that I've only experienced a few times in my life - it was pure magic! This is probably the premier Americana/roots festival in the country and is highly recommended. Although the crowds keep some folks away, you will not find the diversity of acoustic music anywhere else on the planet. Hey, it's right up the road in Wilkesboro!

2006 was another great year in Charlotte, not only for catching national acts, but also for the diversity of local and regional music available right here in our own backyard. The area music scene just keeps getting stronger by the year through the support of you, the listening audience. I think a New Year's resolution worthy of consideration in addition to losing those ten holiday pounds is to support more local music. After all, these are your friends and neighbors! By the same token, try to catch as many of your favorite national roots artists as is affordable. I don't know about you, but not

too many of the folks I listen to sell a bunch of CDs and most make their living on the road. Think of it as investing in art.

Speaking of recordings, there are a few out there that caught my ear in the past month. Every few years the Dawg (David Grisman) reconnects with his bluegrass roots and briefly abandons the "Dawg" jazz



Dennis "Cuz" Frost

he's become famous for. Such is the case this time around with *The David Grisman Bluegrass Experience*. Although this band has been burning up the Bay area music scene with standing room crowds for several years, this is the first time this incarnation has been heard on disc. Highlights here include the Carter Family classic **Engine 143**, Charlie Poole's **Baltimore Fire**, and the hippie classic, **Old and In the Way**. These tunes have the feel and freshness of being played under a big old oak tree at your favorite spring festival. The next disc has been out a little bit, but is becoming a favorite with each listening. If your cup of tea is a fusion of old time, mixed with a bit of jug band nuance, you may enjoy the new one from Old Crow Medicine Show called *Big Iron World*. This is not a slick recording, but it is definitely a passionate one that mixes fifty-year-old covers and originals with ease. Produced by David Rawlings with a guest appearance by Gillian Welch, this one is just plain fun. Last and certainly not least is an odd recording from J. J. Cale and Eric Clapton called *Road to Escondido* - I guess I say odd because of the fact that while Clapton has been in the spot-

light his whole life, Cale has seemingly spent a career seemingly trying not to be famous. (He may tour every seven years or so if we're lucky!) Well, this go round J. J. Cale is in the forefront and Clapton appears in a supporting role as Cale has written all the tunes but two on the disc. This one has that smoky, deep-fried groove that has become a J. J. Cale trademark throughout his career - a keeper. That's about it for this month as we are in the doldrums of the year in terms of new releases. That will all change next month - January typically has avalanches of new releases for the body and soul - I can't wait to share some with you. Happy New Year to each and every one of you and remember those resolutions!

CUZ

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

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