

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Welcome to the New Year's edition of Cuz's Corner! The dawning of a new year is traditionally a time of reflection, as well as one for renewal, resolution, and anticipation. In this spirit, we will look back at 2008, as well as open the window on musical happenings in the upcoming year.

Last year was a huge one in the history of the Charlotte Folk Society, with its move from its longtime home at CPCC to the environs of the historical and beautiful Great Aunt Stella Center. Even in a year of recession, attendance was excellent for all the Gatherings and the April Verch ticketed concert wound up being both a financial and artistic success. I guess I'm repeating myself, but the return of concerts and jams to this wonderful building after a rather long hiatus is a beautiful thing!

There were many great shows in the area last year, but the ones that stand out in my mind were the **John Hiatt and Lyle Lovett** show at Belk, the **David Lindley and Carrie Rodriguez** shows at the Muse, **Jerry Douglas** at the Neighborhood Theatre, and **The Infamous Stringdusters** at the Visulite. Any evening spent in the wonderful McGlohan Theatre is a religious experience, but the **Darrell Scott, Steve Earl/Allison Moorer**, and **Richie Havens** shows were simply amazing.

As with any year, the music world lost artists that have shaped their genre. Some passed with much deserved fanfare, as was the case with the great and influential **Odetta**. Other greats, however, left this plane mostly unnoticed by the general populace, with their life's work

mainly appreciated by other musicians and true music fans. This article is dedicated to all of these folks that passed on this year, most specifically **Chris Gaffney**, who passed away April 17th of liver cancer. Chris was best known for being **Dave Alvin's** talented sideman and being founder of the rootsy Tex-Mex band, **The Hacienda Brothers**, which was in the process of bursting on the national scene at his death. To quote his obituary, "Gaffney was one of those guys working a regular job and playing gigs in crappy bars at night that never got the sort of break his talent might have merited, but in whatever theater, nightclub or dive you caught his act in, no matter what spot he was playing in that night, you were going to get a great show." The sounds of American roots music have largely been shaped by blue collar musicians like Chris Gaffney and we are all the better for it. Whether it is music from the Appalachians, the Delta, Cajun country, Texas, or the Midwest, the voices that shaped American roots music were probably friends and neighbors rather than record executives.

Much as the anticipation of the New Year is in a way a rebirth, seeds scattered by those that shaped our music and heritage sprout in the form of a new generation picking up those very traditions and giving them their own distinctive personalities. It just amazes me to see just how many

young people there are carrying on the traditions of the earlier generations and how they are already putting yet another new twist to those traditions. In hearing young groups such as **The Snyder Family, Bearfoot**, and many others, I feel we are in good shape for generations to come. I guess music is a metaphor for life, as both follow the inevitable pattern of birth, death, and rebirth!

Although it is relatively quiet in terms of new releases, there is much to look forward to in the coming year. I'm intensely excited about the release of a new **Buddy and Julie Miller** disc on March 3. **Written in Chalk** features eight new Julie Miller songs, a few covers, a co-write, and features special guests Emmylou Harris, Patty Griffin, Robert Plant, and others. Julie

Miller is one of the truly outstanding writers today, especially for her gospel material, and Buddy, in my rather opinionated estimation, is one of the greatest roots artists working today – look out for this one!

The concert scene is also shaping up nicely for next year. The two shows I want to give you a "heads up" on are **Joan Baez's** March 2nd show at McGlohan Theatre (www.maxxmusic.com) and the legendary **John Prine's** March 27th appearance at Ovens Auditorium. (www.ovensauditorium.com) The Cuz pick for January is the **Infamous Stringdusters** show on January 10 at the Visulite – my very favorite bluegrass band at the moment! (www.maxxmusic.com) Also not to be missed and a co-pick, so to speak, is a solo gig by



Cuz and Little Bit

the one and only **David Bromberg** January 14th at the Neighborhood Theatre, a one man roots music extravaganza! (www.neighborhoodtheatre.com) Also, one need not search any further for good music than the next two CFS Gatherings featuring **Fays-suox McLean** this Friday night (see front page article!) and, coming in February, Mike Craver, Bill Hicks, and Jim Watson – all original members of the **Red Clay Ramblers** – joined by Joe Newberry – wow! (www.folksociety.org)

Well, that's it for this month! Hope you all have a happy and prosperous 2009 (in music, anyway) and we'll visit in February! Support live music!

Cuz

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

All-Day Sacred Harp Singing February 7th

The Charlotte Sacred Harp Singers are hosting an All-Day Sacred Harp Singing on Saturday, February 7, 9 AM-4 PM. The Singing will be from **The Sacred Harp** (Denson book, 1991 Edition) and will take place at Archdale Church of Christ, 2525 Archdale Drive, in Charlotte. Admission is free; donations are appreciated. Bring a covered dish for dinner on the grounds.

The day's events will open with a singing school at 9 AM, led by

Hugh McGraw. He has been singing shaped note music since 1953 and was editor of the most recent edition of **The Sacred Harp**. Mr. McGraw was featured recently in the documentary film **Awake My Soul** (<http://awakemysoul.com>). For more information, call Catherine at 704-900-7850 or visit www.charlottesacredharp.org.

What is Sacred Harp Singing?

Sacred Harp is a form of a cappella singing unique to America. This type of singing has been passed down from generation to generation since the 1700s, having been rooted in colonial "singing schools." Sacred Harp singings are not performances; all are encouraged to participate as singers, though visitors are always welcome to participate as listeners.

Sacred Harp singing is closely related to Christian Harmony, Southern Harmony, and Old Harp/New Harp singing. The term "sacred harp" refers to the most holy instrument of all – the human voice. For more information about the history of Sacred Harp singing, visit www.fasola.org.

Instrument Raffle Winners

We are indebted to Glen Alexander and Bob Anderson of The Violin Shoppe for donating the instruments for our 2008 raffle: a KM-505 Kentucky Artist Deluxe A-Model Mandolin and a Hand-crafted Romanian Violin from Keith, Curtis, and Clifton. Both instruments were beautiful in appearance and tone. Thanks to all of you who purchased tickets in the past year!

The winning raffle tickets were

drawn during our December 7th Holiday Potluck. Neither winner was present. Both are local folks. Dennis Frost contacted them and arranged to deliver their prizes.

Dawn Folmer held the winning mandolin raffle ticket. She purchased her ticket at the April Verch concert in November. She already plays the bowed psaltery, but is looking forward to learning to play her mandolin.



Happy winner Dawn Folmer

Malcolm Schaeffer's name was drawn in the violin raffle. He bought his winning ticket at Festival in the Park. He does not play the violin, but both of his daughters do – one of them professionally. One of them will be the lucky recipient of this lovely instrument.



CFS President Dennis Frost presenting violin to Malcolm Schaeffer