

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Greetings and welcome to yet another edition of Cuz's Corner. As is always the case, the live music scene slows down a bit in the heat of summer as the festival season is pretty much over and touring performers tend to get off the road until fall. That said, one exception is the wonderful **FloydFest**, which takes place right off the Blue Ridge Parkway, just south of Floyd, Virginia. In addition to festival artists we are familiar with, I love the fact that there are stages dedicated to African music and the music of the Crooked Road in Virginia. This indeed makes for one of the most diverse musical experiences you'll ever have. The site is knock-dead gorgeous, the vibe is ultra cool, and the festival is extremely well run – all of which qualifies FloydFest to be Cuz's gig of the month for July. The festival runs from July 23 – 26 and information can be found at <http://atwproductions.com>.

It seems in our modern society that families are spread all over the country, everyone is in a rush, and valued time with friends and family has become a rarity. I feel that we have lost that sense of community that sustained us in past generations. I have found out first-hand how integral our beloved music and dance communities are in replacing societal support systems. Earlier in the year I was diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer. As any of you know that have been through a similar diagnosis, your world comes to a screeching halt, you feel isolated, and basically feel like locking yourself in a dark closet. There came a time a few weeks later that I felt like letting close friends in the music community know of my condition and I am so thankful now

that I did. Within a week, word spread and I began receiving calls and emails from all over the country with support, prayers, and an humbling outpouring of concern and love. A number of musicians (who come from the land of no health insurance) even offered to do benefits for me. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed and the strength I derived from my “community” was humbling and instrumental in my moving on, getting out of that dark closet, and living again. Now my treatments are going extremely well and life is getting back to normal. I feel that without that initial sense of community and consequent support system, things might be different. I guess the bottom line here is to not take our musical families for granted. Folk societies, dance groups, and music associations go beyond musical preservation. They are, indeed, our surrogate families and, in times of crisis, our support systems.

Usually in this article, I try to turn you on to several up and coming CD releases, but this month I feel obligated to give a special artist and release my undivided attention. In 2007, **Levon Helm** released his debut project after having recovered from throat cancer. After treatment, few thought the voice of **The Band** would be able to sing again. After a brave recovery, Levon proved them all wrong with the release of the critically ac-

claimed **Dirt Farmer** disc. Few thought Levon would ever tour again, but later the same year he began taking his **Ramble** on the road. In case you didn't know, while recovering, Levon hosted jam sessions on his farm. They featured an afternoon and evening of food and jam sessions and were attended by a “who's who” list of roots and rock 'n' roll musicians. These sessions “rambled” from genre to genre and featured a revolving door of various artists; hence, the tour was named. Where **Dirt Farmer** featured songs he grew up listening to mixed with



“Cuz” and Little Bit

related covers, his new **Electric Dirt** is more indicative of his live Rambles and is a textbook of roots music. Don't let the title fool you, as this is far from a rock 'n' roll record. But the ease with which he floats from rock, to folk, to blues, to gospel is indeed electric. Levon is capably accompa-

nied by the amazing Larry Campbell, who produced, and his daughter Amy's wonderful band, **Ollabelle**. This release rises above all the others this month and stands alone as Cuz's pick of the month. Last year at the Americana Music Association Conference and Festival he won over our hearts and souls, not just with his two-and-one-half hour Ryman performance, but also with his undeniable passion for American roots music. He wound up playing all over the place that weekend and I speak for most who attended the conference by saying we love Levon! He's special and so is the new CD!

That's it for this month and I hope you have a great early summer.

Check out the CFS 2009-2010 Gathering lineup on page 15. The season kicks off with the amazing Snyder Family Band in August – come see what all the buzz is about concerning this bluegrass family! As there are fewer national acts coming to town, the hot months are perfect for checking out some great local music – you’ll be glad you did!

Cuz

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