

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Greetings to all of you music lovers out there and welcome to **Cuz's Corner**. As I write this article, the sights and sounds of May's LEAF Festival are still very fresh in my memory: the music, fire dancing by the lake, contra dancing, beautiful black mountains in the distance, late night campfires and jams with friends, arts and crafts, and simply being in a special place with special people for a whole weekend. As if we needed icing on the cake, the festival ended with an inspired two-hour set by the one and only Arlo Guthrie and family singing selections from the Woody Guthrie songbook, some of Arlo's tunes through the years, and material from Johnny Irion and Sarah Lee Guthrie. Those of us from the '60s were even treated to **Alice's Restaurant**. You realize the years are flying by when Arlo begins the song with the line, "40 years ago last Thanksgiving Day . . ." Wow!

June is shaping up to be a busy month for folk and roots music, so let's cut to the chase and give you some ideas for music to catch – better erase those old notes on the fridge! First of all, my gig of the month takes place on June 10th when **Uncle Earl** takes the stage at the Evening Muse on their way to Bonnaroo 2007. All of you folks that have seen these talented ladies perform know what the buzz is about. This is a band I feel will take old time music well through this century. Their music is fresh and creative without sacrificing the essence and spirit of this Appalachian art form. Although their songs, instrumentals, and harmonies are breathtaking, the thing that really struck me at MerleFest was the absolute joy they get from playing music – the experience is infectious. Great bands usually move up to

larger venues after playing Bonnaroo, so don't miss this opportunity to catch this wonderful old time band in an intimate setting! (www.maxxmusic.com) If this is not enough, how about a co-bill with two of the hottest young bluegrass bands touring these days when the **Infamous Stringdusters** and **King Wilkie** take the stage at the Muse on June 7th? Like **Uncle Earl**, they are steeped in their musical traditions, while, at the same time, bringing something fresh and new to the table. Another long-time favorite of mine has roots in the Texas fiddling tradition and is known for her popular duet recordings with the great Chip Taylor. Carrie Rodriguez makes her Charlotte debut as a solo artist at the Muse on June 16th. Her solo CD, **Seven Angels on a Bicycle**, reached the number four spot on the Americana charts. The next night, June 17th, at the McGlohon Theatre, there is a show definitely worth consideration as we have the **Carolina Chocolate Drops** opening for perennial MerleFest favorites, **The Waybacks**. **The Chocolate Drops** have set festival crowds buzzing lately with their brand of black string band stylings and it's good to know that the music of North Carolina fiddler Joe Thompson will live on for some time to come. **The Waybacks** are essentially too eclectic to describe as you will typically hear most of the branches of the proverbial roots music tree, along with awesome instrumental work, and some great humor to boot, all in one set. If you are still in the festival mood, don't forget the annual Big Lick Bluegrass Festival down in Oakboro, North Carolina. (www.oakboromusichall.com) Headliners this year include the **Lewis Family**, **Cherryholmes**, and **The Grascals**. This festival happens on June 10th and 11th and may just be the one for

you if you enjoyed the bluegrass festivals of times gone by. As Big Lick is only thirty minutes away, this makes for a perfect day trip without burning a tank of gas!

Now that we've covered the live music side of the spectrum, there are several exquisite discs that I would love to turn you on to. The new one from Adrienne Young gets five big stars on the Cuz scale. The new one is called **Room to Grow** and is strong musically, spiritually, and lyrically throughout. (www.adrienneyoung.com) Not only is Adrienne a gifted songwriter, but this young woman has for years championed sustainable agriculture. In fact, a portion of the proceeds from each disc sold goes to CommunityGarden.org and FoodRoutes.org. Please check out these organizations, also. Another CD definitely worth your attention is the new one from Jimmy Lafave entitled **Cimarron Manifesto**. (www.jimmylafave.com) I first came to know Jimmy's music through the **Ribbon of Highway** tour a few years ago, a tribute to the music of Woody Guthrie. Whether singing a cover of a Dylan or Woody Guthrie song or singing one of his originals, this man's delivery is absolutely breathtaking – another five stars for this one. Richard Thompson delivers yet again in his latest, **Sweet Warrior**. (www.richardthompson-music.com) Although perhaps not as strong as Richard's **Mock Tutor** effort a number of years ago, this winner of the BBC Lifetime Achievement Award and founder of the ground breaking group **Fairport Convention** has come up with an effort that will satisfy most fans of British folk-rock.

That's all the room I have for this month. So, try to feast on some of the musical bounty we have in the area – catch a show and consider the next CFS Gathering with **Big Medicine**. Have a wonderful early summer and see you in July!

Cuz