

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

As usual, I'd like to welcome you to another edition of Cuz's Corner. Somehow we have flown through spring and those wonderful festivals right into 90+ degree-days. Speaking of which, MerleFest was another mind-blowing experience, with drier and warmer conditions than I can ever remember. Highlights were too many to list, but the sets that are still resonating in my ears came from **The Wilders, John Doyle and Karan Kasey, Levon Helm and the Ramble, Marty Stuart and His Fabulous Superlatives, Riley Baugus and Dirk Powell, Laurie Lewis, Blue Highway, Tim O'Brien**, and many others. Jam sessions are of course a staple, and always amazing, at this festival and my favorite included **Peter Rowan, Tish Hinojosa, Sam Bush, Laurie Lewis, and Mike Bub** rendering old Reggae and hippie favorites from days gone by. This year made it twenty years for Carolyn and myself (at MerleFest) and I suppose it has become a rite of spring for us!

This summer is especially exciting for us in the Charlotte Folk Society in that, as of August 8th, Gatherings will take place in the beautiful Great Aunt Stella Center. This will be an especially moving transition for me, personally. I actually cut my teeth on roots music in this building and feel especially proud to have been a small part of the effort to bring music back into this outstanding historic landmark. I feel this will be a bitter-sweet move, as CPCC has been such an integral part of who we are as an organization from the outset. Reality is, however, that during the last couple of years attendance grew to the point of our

consistently having overflow crowds and it became evident we needed more space. To actually wind up in this amazing building is indeed a gift! The programming committee is, as we speak, putting the final touches on the next season and I think our membership and the Charlotte community can look forward to one of the strongest lineups ever – see you at the Stella!

I would like to acknowledge two legends in music who have recently passed on.

Bruce "Utah" Phillips died *Cuz and Little Bit* May 23 of congestive heart failure at the age of 73. Not only was he a wildly innovative performer and activist, he is also known for writing great songs such as **Green Rolling Hills of West Virginia** and **Rock, Salt, and Nails**. When not on tour, he was busy in his community, creating revolving shelters for the homeless in area churches. He will be missed. Also, sadly, on June 2, we lost rock and roll innovator **Bo Diddley** at the age of 80. Bo was known for a beat and rhythm thought to have been borrowed from the hambone (slapping rhythm on one's body) he saw being used by black street performers in his formative years. Many musicians through the years have encompassed the "Bo beat", including Elvis Presley, Elvis Costello, Bruce Springsteen, **The Stones, The Who** and others. Is tracing a musical style from hambone to Elvis Costello and the Boss the folk process or what – amazing!



There are a couple of shows coming up this month that you distinguished acoustic listeners might want to be aware of. First of all, two of my favorite young bands converge on McGlohan Theatre on June 11th. Both the **Duhks** and the **Waybacks** have been pushing the folk envelope at major festivals around the world for sometime now and catching them in a co-bill will be a major treat – I smell a major jam about to happen! Two nights later, my current favorite bluegrass band, **The Infamous Stringdusters**, play the Visulite on June 13th. This band features traditional bluegrass sounds coupled with amazing modern instrumental prowess that is sure to please both traditional and contemporary fans alike! Information for both shows at (www.maxxmusic.com)

What a coincidence it is that one of my CD picks is the brand new effort from none other than the **Infamous Stringdusters**. (www.thestringdusters.com) This self-titled disc will probably wind up being one of the hottest bluegrass records of the year and has the potential of cutting down the drive to, say Asheville, to about an hour! (In record stores June 10th)

My favorite songwriters have always been those that look at our human existence as outside observers, rather than as participants. That's why **James McMurtry**, son of literary great Larry McMurtry, has long been one of my absolute favorites. **Just Us Kids**, his new effort, is full of thoughtful, hard-hitting songs and may be one of his best ever. If you like touchy-feely songs that make you feel all warm inside, McMurtry may not be for you. However, if you are after honest songs that reflect our society as the writer sees it, presented in an amazing literary style in an edgy manner, this one's for you! (www.jamesmcmurtry.com) This

one reigned at number one on the AMA charts for five solid weeks and at number two for about the same amount of time – guess we love our rebels!

As for my CD of the month, I fear I will need advice from readers in terms of how to extract my Cuz’s pick out of my truck’s player – help! **John Hiatt’s Same Old Man** disc is a rarity in today’s music market – an entire album without remotely mediocre cuts. John Hiatt is not only an amazing performer, but has also written songs for a “who’s who” list of the legends of our time and traveled the roads of America with many of these legends. I love the opening track, **Old Days**, which talks about the days on the road with the likes of blues greats Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and how Sonny Terry’s sleeping with his good eye open gave him the creeps as a young man. I love John Hiatt and absolutely love this CD! (www.johnhiatt.com) John Hiatt is the winner of this year’s lifetime achievement award for songwriting at the Americana Music Association awards on September 18th at the Ryman Auditorium – what an appropriate CD! (#3 on the AMA charts) This month, there are more quality recordings than I can write about, so how about checking out Cuz’s Corner on www.folksociety.org for a complete listing. That’s about it for this month, and as usual check out some live music – it’s good for what ails you! Hope to see you at CPCC on the 13th for **Nashville Bound** (see article) and at the Great Aunt Stella Center in August!

Cuz

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