

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

It's really hard to believe, but by the time of our June Gathering, the kids will be out of school and we will all probably be longing for those cool, rainy days of May. As with the seasonal cycles, the sequence of birth, death, and rebirth is apparent to us festival-goers year after year. The really cool thing with roots and traditional music is that, even though artists from previous generations are no longer with us, the music lives on in the voices and fingertips of the next generation. At this year's MerleFest, one had a subtle feeling that the proverbial torch was being passed on to a younger generation. The artists that changed the landscape of acoustic music in the early '80s suddenly find themselves the elder statesmen, as a new generation of young, creative artists flex their muscles and begin pushing the musical boundaries in new and exciting directions. Artists such as **The Seldom Scene, Sam Bush and the New Grass Revival, Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck, Tony Rice, David "Dawg" Grisman** and many others took a struggling genre, added jazz, world music, classical overtones, and rock, reviving the music to its present healthy state (think huge festivals like Telluride and MerleFest). These artists have formed a strong foundation for the exciting new musicians that were prevalent at this year's festival. These kids basically took over the famous Midnight Jam. An array of young artists impacted this year's festivities, but I was especially overwhelmed by the gypsy swing of the **Belleville Outfit** (nominated for "Best Emerging Artists" – Americana Music Association), the fantastic writing and sibling harmonies of the **Lovell Sisters**, the original take on old-time and bluegrass of

Alaska's **Bearfoot**, the hard driving bluegrass of **Sierra Hull**, and the original take on new grass by the **Farewell Drifters**. Not only are these performers great to catch live; all have fantastic new discs I would wholeheartedly recommend. Do go to the artists' websites and check their music out – you'll be impressed!

Well, folks, it's summertime. Gas is a couple of bucks cheaper than last year, so it seems to me that June would be a great month for a road trip or two! **The Belleville Outfit** is the host band for a new and exciting festival down near Spartanburg, June 19-20. Over the last four years, **The Music Camp** has become a rite of summer, hosting a mostly regional array of artists. However, this year's edition has morphed into a festival of major proportions. The lineup includes the **Dirty Dozen Brass Band, The Duhks, The Infamous Stringdusters, Donna the Buffalo, Casey Driessen, The Belleville Outfit**, and a host of great regional and local talent. If you aren't into the camping scene, the "Camp" is a short daytrip from the Queen City. It's a mighty tough year to kick off a major festival, so please think about helping out my **Belleville** buds and check it out – I think you will be glad you did. (www.themusiccamp.com)

A bit closer to home, **Destination Cleveland County** is hosting **Earl Scruggs Home Again** on June 19th

at 7:30 PM in the Malcolm Brown Auditorium in Shelby, North Carolina. The festivities this year will again be a fundraiser for the Scruggs Center, which when opened, will educate the public about the area's rich history and musical traditions, as well as the legacy of the great Earl Scruggs. This is a project deserving of your support and you can find out all about it by going to www.destinationclevelandcounty.org. If Earl's amazing 2007 performance

is any indication, this will be a no miss! That show was a sellout, so if you are interested in going, you might go ahead and get your tickets now.

Back in his adolescent years, **Steve Earle** hung out with songwriting legends **Townes Van Zandt** and **Guy Clark**, learning his amazing

song craft and picking up probably more than a few bad habits. These days, the bad habits are far behind him and Steve has become one of the most celebrated songwriters, producers, and political activists of our time. His latest disc comes full circle, celebrating the life and the songs of the late Townes Van Zandt. This CD, as understated as any Steve has done, is aptly named just **Townes**. All the favorites are covered here with a tasteful backing band, which includes Tim O'Brien, Darrell Scott, Dennis Crouch, Steve's son, Justin Townes, and his wife, Allison Moorer, and others. If you are a lover of well-crafted songs, this one's for you! (www.steveearle.com) I would also encourage you to check out the music of Townes Van Zandt, if you haven't already. A great way to get up to speed on his



"Cuz" and Little Bit

life and music is by visiting Townes Van Zandt Central! (www.townesvanzandt.com)

Over the last decade or so, **T-Bone Burnett** has defied the law of popular music pushing roots music into the national consciousness with the critically acclaimed **O Brother** soundtrack, but I feel his real forte is throwing differing artists and genres together, thereby creating something new and exciting. A recent example is the pairing of **Robert Plant and Alison Krauss** for their Grammy winning **Rising Sand** disc. The amazing thing here is that this disc also won album of the year at the roots-based Americana Music Association awards show last year. (We with the AMA will tell you we were first!) This time around, Burnett has paired **Elvis Costello** with the likes of Mike Compton, Stuart Duncan, Jerry Douglas, Dennis Crouch, Emmylou Harris, and Jim Lauderdale for the extremely satisfying **Secret, Profane and Sugar-cane** disc. My highpoint is the Cajun sounding duet with Emmylou entitled **The Crooked Line**. If you are looking for a CD to kick you out of your musical box, this might be the one – T-Bone has done it yet again! (www.elviscostello.com)

For years, the **Red Stick Ramblers** have excelled in the dance music of the Texas – Louisiana border. Check out their new **My Suitcase Is Always Packed** CD for excellent old country, Texas swing, and a hearty helping of Cajun romps. This is the real deal and highly recommended. (www.redstickramblers.com)

Finally, I would like to give the new **Gibson Brothers' Ring the Bell** a big two thumbs up. These upstate New York siblings have long combined impressive originals and unusual covers into a vocal style that brings to mind the

great family duets, including, most of all, the **Louvin Brothers**. Also, you have to give the brothers an A+ for including not one, but two great tunes by CFS favorite **Joe Newberry**. This is an extremely satisfying and classy bluegrass CD! (www.thegibsonbrothers.com)

That's about it for this month. There is a lot of music out there on the ole lost highway, so try to get out and find some live music you enjoy – it'll heal what ails you! For a comprehensive listing of concerts and festivals, please check out the concert calendar. Also, as usual, if there is CD or artist you would like to share with other readers, please let me know.

The Best!
Cuz

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