

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

As I write this May edition of Cuz's Corner, I have to admit that my senses are still overwhelmed by all the music I heard at MerleFest last weekend. As usual, the musical choices were beyond eclectic, ranging from four days of old time traditions and demonstrations in the traditional tent to a very respectful set of music on the main stage by Elvis Costello. I guess my absolute highlight among many would have to be the long-awaited reunion on stage of Pat Flynn, John Cowan, Bela Fleck, and Sam Bush, better known and loved as the **New Grass Revival**. Their



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rendition of Townes Van Zandt's **White Freightliner Blues** brought the massive Saturday night crowd to its feet and tears to my eyes. (I was not alone!) Another impressive aspect of this year's festival was how many fantastic young bands and performers there were present. I guess the main thing that I took home from this year's MerleFest was the fact that acoustic music may be in perhaps the best shape it's ever been since the big folk scare of the '60s. Some of the young groups I really enjoyed included: the fresh old time sounds of **Uncle Earl**; the Joe Thompson-mentored **Carolina Chocolate Drops**; the fresh bluegrass sounds of the **Infamous Stringdusters**; the stunningly odd interpretations of traditional music by **Crooked Still**; fifteen-year-old mandolin whiz, Sierra Hull; the blistering bluegrass of **Cherryholmes**; and the unbelievable fiddle techniques

of the **Waybacks'** twenty-three-year-old Warren Hood. These kids have learned well the techniques of the present day masters and I have no doubts that they will also take the music through this century and beyond. Although their interpretations are new and fresh, none of these young performers lose sight of the traditions – the state of the music is in fine hands!

My friends will find this hard to believe, but I don't think I've listened to any music since MerleFest and anyone who has ever been will understand the reason why. However, there are a couple of CDs I did listen to before heading up to Wilkesboro that I

would like to share with you. Although it may be odd to be reviewing a rock record in a CFS newsletter, I highly recommend the new effort by **Son Volt**, which is perched at number one on the AMA (Americana Music Association) charts at the moment. Jay Farrar has written a batch of songs, which I feel are as much in the Woody Guthrie tradition as any that I've heard in a while. If you are yearning for rock & roll with powerful lyrics and a consciousness, you may want to check this one out. (www.sonvolt.net)

Imagine two old friends pulling out their guitars and singing the songs everybody in the room knows by the fireplace on a winter's night. Well, that is exactly the feeling you get listening to the new one from John Prine and Mac Wiseman called **Standard Songs**

for Average People. (www.johnprine.net) You'll find timeless songs here such as **Blue Eyed Elaine, Saginaw Michigan, Death of Floyd Collins, and Pistol Packin' Mama**. Mac Wiseman is in great voice on this one, as is John Prine, and I think if you are a fan of duet singing, this one may be in your collection for years to come!

Well, that's about it for this month, but next month I'm expecting new ones from Adrienne Young, Richard Shindell, and more. I will also give you folks the "where and when" of a Charlotte appearance of old time phenomenon **Uncle Earl** in June. Also, be sure to come out and experience **The Gospel Jubilators** at the next CFS gathering on the 11th of the month – they blew people away at MerleFest and are my gig of the month! In the meantime, go out and catch some live music at a venue near you and have a great spring.

Cuz

Share your favorites with Cuz at either 704-532-8846 or dcmfrost@mindspring.com.

New CFS Member



Welcome to Elin Marie, born on April 6th to Mark and Krista Murphy Woitkiewicz! Father Mark reports they are having a lot of fun with her. Doesn't she look ready to take up the fiddle?