

## Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Well folks, it's that time of year once again. We've endured the heat of the Carolina summer, felt the frosty mornings of early fall, and are contemplating yet another holiday season. I guess when you get right down to it, Thanksgiving is just about my favorite of the major holidays as I feel its true meaning hasn't been as overwhelmed by out-of-control commercialism as others. Americans still pretty much spend the day with the friends and family members they feel blessed to have in their lives. Well, O.K., you still have the culinary overindulgences and the football games, but that's tradition also, I suppose. This Thanksgiving finds me more thankful than I have ever been this time of year. I have a great marriage, unbelievable friends, and, after quite the journey, good mental and physical health. The year started off as probably the worst in my life and I owe my well-being to all the great folks that have supported me through it all. In addition, having music in my life sure didn't hurt! Speaking of which, I feel thankful for the health and vitality of the folk/roots music scene we have in the community today. We have grown from a time when I remember traveling across the state to hear good live music. Now, our city offers so many options on some nights that it is just plain hard to choose. Hats off to all the venues and promoters that put the music ahead of the almighty dollar – you know who you are! Closer to home, I'm thankful that the Charlotte Folk Society is not only financially strong after this economic downturn, but has achieved amazing visibility in the community from its move to the gorgeous Great Aunt Stella Center. Thanks to all that helped CFS

achieve this, especially Mark Ponischil, the Stella's manager, sound man, and one-man show. I feel thankful for all of my musician friends all over the country that overwhelmed me with their love and support this past year – I feel certain you are musical spirits and are on this planet to heal us all. I feel we are all blessed to have so many non-profit associations like the Folk Alliance, the Americana Music Association, ASCAP, SESAC, and the IBMA that keep the music viable and support and nurture the musicians by helping them procure a living wage. In a nutshell, I feel overwhelmingly lucky to be involved in the music scene, whether it is the Folk Society, WGWG radio, or the Americana Music Association. It's been a fulfilling journey!

I find it a bit odd when the folks I grew up listening to become those icons that begin accumulating lifetime achievement awards. This has become the case with **Sam Bush**, who, in addition to winning Grammys, has recently garnered the AMA's Instrumentalist Lifetime Achievement Award and has influenced more young players than you can shake a stick at. Over the years Sam has no doubt expanded the horizons of bluegrass music by fusing it with blues, rock, reggae, and jazz without ever turning his back on the genre itself. As I've mentioned before, Sam and others are truly

responsible for the viability of the music today and we might perhaps not have a Telluride Festival or MerleFest without their willingness to put a new face on tradition. I feel by widening the bluegrass umbrella, there is more of an opportunity for both traditional and contemporary artists to carve out a living than in days gone by. Having been into this music for most of my adult life, I can't recall a time where there were more talented young bands on the circuit than today. The bluegrass music of today is a living, breathing, roots style and not the museum piece it



"Cuz" and Little Bit

was becoming before the late '70s. You have to love the folk process, and Sam Bush has been in the center of it all for decades with his blender mixing it all up! There is no one that can switch from Bob Marley to Bill Monroe in concert with such ease and uncompromising passion. His shows are as exciting to-

day as they were in his years with the **New Grass Revival** and his new project, **Circles Around Me**, is as good as anything he has recorded. This one has it all and is Cuz's pick of the month and a potential stocking stuffer come Christmas Eve. Although there is no escaping a few new-grass romps, this one has its share of traditional tunes and well executed co-writes. Special guests such as **Jerry Douglas** and classical bassist **Edgar Meyer** add to the proceedings nicely. This one screams "road trip"! ([www.sambush.com](http://www.sambush.com))

It surely was fun being involved in the Art of Sound festival in Shelby the other weekend. The festival is small, intimate, and features great,

mostly regional music. **Polecat Creek** co-founder **Kari Sickenberger** played Saturday night with her band and featured tunes from her new **Settle Down** disc. I knew as soon as I listened to it on the way back from Shelby that I would have to tell you folks about this one! In addition to **Polecat Creek** members **Natalya Weinstein, John Miller,** and co-founder **Laurelyn Dossett,** special guests **Alice Gerrard** and **John Herrman** team up to render this CD of original music a real keeper. Kari drifts back and forth from traditional country music to old-time romps deftly and seamlessly. The songwriting is stellar throughout and the instrumentals are crisp, clean, and exciting. In fact, I was telling a friend the other day that a vast majority of the discs roots music radio promoters are pushing these days don't hold a candle to this North Carolina artist's effort. Check this one out at [www.karisickerberger.com](http://www.karisickerberger.com); you'll be glad you did!

Well, there is an amazing lineup of no-miss shows coming to town in November; in fact it's getting a bit ridiculous. I would highly recommend catching the **Flatlanders** at McGlohon Theater on November 11th. **Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore** are true icons and should not be missed and this one is Cuz's gig of the month along with **Lyle Lovett and his Large Band** at Belk Theater on the 17th! On November 14<sup>th</sup>, twelve-string magician **Leo Kottke** is at McGlohon, while CFS favorite **April Verch, Ellen Jewell,** and **Sarah Borges** are all at the Muse – I can't help you here, folks! For unbelievable bluegrass, both **Sara Watkins** and the **Infamous Stringdusters** are at the Visulite Theater on the 20th. All of these shows can be found at [www.maxxmusic.com](http://www.maxxmusic.com). Don't forget **Doc Watson** November 21th, as Doc's shows are always legendary. ([www.](http://www.)

[neighborhoodtheatre.com](http://neighborhoodtheatre.com)) Honestly, there are more great shows coming in November than I have time and space to list, so I'd recommend you check out the bible of concert listings in this newsletter! By all means, don't forget the next CFS Gathering featuring the amazing talents of our own members on the 13th! Also, do make plans for our annual Holiday Potluck on December 12th, featuring music of the season by **Little Windows**, but more about that next month. Have a great Thanksgiving, take care of yourselves, and catch one of the numerous great shows coming to town this month!

Cuz

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