

# Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Well, folks, here we are in late September; the heat of summer still persists and the incessant drought continues to wrap its dry, parched fingers around the piedmont of the Carolinas. It's interesting that this situation is forcing us to discuss and think about water issues that have long been a huge part of the consciousness, the art, and the music of the American Southwest. Well, that said, there has not been a drought in terms of great musical performances, great new CDs, and wonderful shows and events coming up in October.

September's highlights were as varied as music itself and spanned the musical spectrum from two rock and roll hall-of-famers at Belk Theatre to an impressive first-time Charlotte appearance of an up-and-coming, progressive, old time band at the most recent CFS gathering in intimate Bryant Hall. Even though I've enjoyed the songs of **Elvis Costello** through the years, as well his recent collaborations with the likes of **Lucinda Williams**, **Emmylou Harris**, and New Orleans legend **Allen Toussaint**, it was his performance with **Steve Naive** that sealed the deal for me. The nearly three-hour performance not only covered most elements of our human condition, but covered many of today's compelling social issues in a masterful style that had the sellout crowd hanging on every word and every emotion. Another highlight of the month came just a few days later at the CFS gathering with **Polecat Creek** at CPCC. I love musicians that tap into the music of the past and then add their own personality,

creativity, and songwriting into the mix, creating new traditional music. Although the group's songs are extremely fresh and new, they creatively meld the sounds and history, as well as southern sayings and expressions from the past, into some unbelievably compelling music. I love it when a crowd of real music lovers leaves a show "buzzing" and this was certainly the case with the overflow crowd at last month's gathering. I have a feeling they will be back through soon, so if you didn't catch them this time, be sure to the next time around! I just heard they will be showcasing at this year's Americana Music Festival in late October, so the little secret about this group is out of the bag – good for them!



**Cuz and Little Bit**

Speaking of the AMA conference, it rolls into Nashville and will take place October 31 – November 3. If you like American roots music, the performers are way too many to list in the space left, so please check it out at [www.americanamusic.org](http://www.americanamusic.org). My highlight every year is the annual awards show in the "mother church." The music is tremendous, but there is nothing like sitting in the Ryman Auditorium and absorbing decades of hillbilly dust oozing out of those creaky old floors. If you don't want to do the entire conference, all you need is a room, a \$30 wristband, and a ticket to the awards show – this is an affordable way to have access to more good music than you can possibly hear in four days.

Also in October, don't forget fall **LEAF**, taking place the 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> of the month in Black Mountain. Artists include **Doc Watson & David Holt**, **The Wilders**, **Henry Butler**, **John Doyle & Liz Taylor**, **Tony Trischka**. ([www.theleaf.com](http://www.theleaf.com)) The very same weekend, the **Art of Sound Festival** takes place at various locations all over Shelby. Headliners include **Jim Lauderdale**, **The Wilders**, **Ernie Hawkins**, **James Leva**, and a stellar lineup of local and regional artists. ([www.ccartscouncil.org](http://www.ccartscouncil.org)) By all means, don't forget the festivities surrounding the Charlotte Folk Society's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on the weekend of October 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. The weekend culminates with an incredible concert at Halton Theater, headlined by NEA Heritage Award winner Joe Thompson and many others. Please see the write-up in this publication for all the details – hope to see everybody there!

I don't know if it is because Christmas is around the corner or because the AMA conference is coming up soon, but there has definitely been escalation in recordings coming out of late. Of the many fine recordings I've listened to this month, I've somehow managed to narrow it down to three absolute favorites. **Emmylou Harris** has stayed true to the music through the years, going all the way back to her collaborations with the great **Gram Parsons**. Her **Songbird** box set deftly illustrates why this twelve-time Grammy winner has become such a force in country, folk, and traditional music the years. ([www.emmylou.net](http://www.emmylou.net)) This handpicked set gives us not only a retrospective of a woman at her peak her entire career, but you get unrecorded tracks, collaborations, and demos to boot. The thing I like

about this set is the fact that both longtime fans with Emmylou catalogs and those new to her music will both treasure this set of recordings. Having recovered from a divorce and being smushed by ranch animals, **Lyle Lovett's It's Not Big, It's Large** CD is perhaps his best in years. In fact two or three of the cuts may be some of his best songs ever. The predominant theme of this disc seems to be not to take life for granted because, "it could all be downhill from here." You can check this disc out at [www.lylelovett.net](http://www.lylelovett.net).

**Steve Earl** has been known as not only a gifted songwriter, but also as a known union, antiwar, anti-death penalty activist through the years. Steve has left behind some of the anger present in the last few CDs and has delivered an excellent batch of songs in his new **Washington Square Serenade** effort. ([www.steveearl.net](http://www.steveearl.net)) I love the heart-felt tribute to Pete Seeger in the song **Steve's Hammer**, as well as the cover of **Tom Wait's Down in the Hole**. The mix of songs on this one is just right, as you have everything from tender love songs and ballads to songs about strip mining and other social issues. This is the gentler and kinder Steve Earl and whether or not this is a trend, only time will tell. Two more CDs I like a lot are **Merle Haggard's Bluegrass Sessions** (his first bluegrass record) with Rob Ickes, Marty Stuart, and others, as well as the new one from hard working **Jim Lauderdale** called **Bluegrass Diaries**. There are so many great CDs out now, it's impossible to mention all of them in this space. I think a great way to explore new and interesting music is to visit the AMA site listed above and pull up the weekly play chart from public radio stations and follow your nose and ears. Have a great fall and mark the week of October 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> on your calendar and help the Folk Society celebrate 25 big years of keeping this American art form

alive and kicking! Heard any great music you would like to share with our community? Let me know and I'll pass it on!

CUZ

*To share your thoughts about your favorite music with Cuz (especially old-time), contact him either at [dcmfrost@mindspring.com](mailto:dcmfrost@mindspring.com) or 704-532-8846.*

## Charlotte's Shapenote Sings

Experience a real Southern tradition every third Tuesday at 7 PM with Charlotte's Shapenote Sings. This group meets at St. Michael's Church, 2211 Margaret Wallace Road, off Independence Boulevard, and sings from **A Sacred Harp**. You are not required to audition or possess great talent - just great enthusiasm! For more information, please contact Catherine at 980-233-9194 or [pravosla68@yahoo.com](mailto:pravosla68@yahoo.com).

## Free Member Ad

**For Sale: Two Mountain Dulcimers - Excellent Condition. McSpadden, 1994:** Tear drop shape. Solid walnut top & sides. Plush lined case. \$275.  
**Oscar Schmidt, 1985:** Hourglass shape. Solid spruce face w/solid mahogany back & sides. Up-graded mahogany fingerboard. Planetary tuners. Soft case. \$150.  
**Contact Donald Pearl at 704-598-9593 evenings or at [dcpearl@mindspring.com](mailto:dcpearl@mindspring.com).**

## Need Community Service Hours?

By Salem Macknee

Attention students! If your school requires you to work community service hours, the Charlotte Folk Society has lots of volunteer opportunities. Here are just a few ideas for how you can check off hours and hear some good music at the same time. Call 704-573-0864 or email [smacknee@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:smacknee@charlotteobserver.com) to find out more.

- Monthly Gatherings: Arrange extra chairs, help answer questions at the table, help pass the hat, help serve refreshments, help put chairs and tables back in place at the end of the night
- Play at our Young Talent Showcase next April if you're an acoustic musician.
- Play with other folk musicians during a community dinner on Christmas Day at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dilworth.
- Many, many jobs at Festival in the Park in September.
- Help set up or clean up at the annual Christmas Potluck.
- Post CFS events on other "what's happening" web sites.
- Refreshments for Gatherings
- Help run a Folk Society table at the Tosco Music Party and other concerts.

